MEPHIBOSHETH SIRRINE

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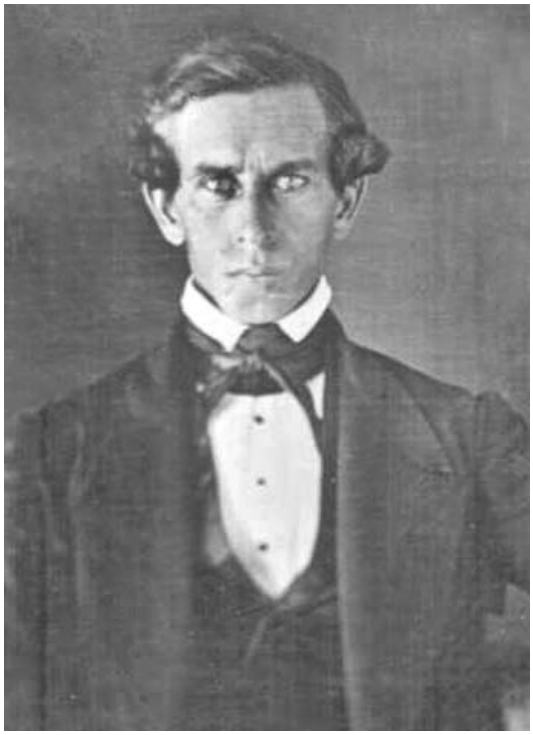
Mephibosheth N. Sirrine 1811-1848



How would you like to have a name like Mephibosheth? Of his ten siblings all but one (my great grandfather, George Warren Sirrine) received biblical names, but theirs were familiar and pronounceable. Mephibosheth tended to sign his name as M. Sirrine. Maybe he got tired of writing it out. I can tell you that even after typing it a hundred times in my notes, it still causes my fingers to hesitate on the keyboard. His siblings, and by one account also the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith, called him Bosha. His second wife, Rachel Gillett, simply called him "Sirrine."

Having found biblical names for all his siblings, his parents Isaac and Sarah Sirrine may have had a religious statement in mind for Mephibosheth, whose name translates to "exterminator of shame; i.e., of idols." Mephibosheth of the Old Testament was a son of Jonathan. Jonathan was killed along with two of his brothers and his father King Saul by the Philistines at the Battle of Gilboa, decapitated, and hung from the wall of Beth-shan. In the panic that followed the defeat, five year old Mephibosheth was accidentally dropped by his nurse, which made him lame for the rest of his life. He spent years in impoverished reclusion, fearing that as Saul's heir to the crown he might be found and executed by King David. But when David finally found him, he welcomed Mephibosheth into his house and restored Jonathan's lands to him.

But the more likely explanation is mundane. He was named after his great uncle Mephibosheth Nelson, his mother's uncle (which probably accounts for his middle initial "N"). Nelson was 14 years older than Sarah, young enough to have been her brother, and a prominent citizen of Cold Spring, Dutchess County, New York. He was a millwright who specialized in industrial projects, one of which powered the famous West Point Foundry. It was a family name; Mephibosheth Nelson (1775) was named after *his* uncle.[1]

Most Mormons have never heard of Mephibosheth N. Sirrine, nor probably for that matter of the biblical character, but in his time he was well known to every Mormon in the state of Michigan, and likely to every one of the early church leaders. His tragically

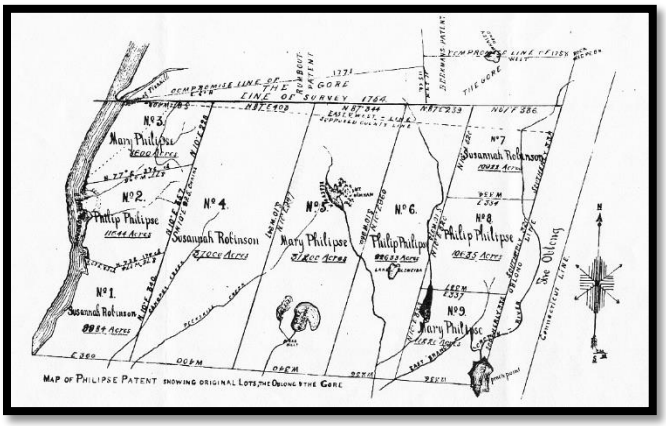
[1] Mephibosheth Nelson (1733) was the son of Francis Nelson.

brief adult life is a lesson in dedication and sacrifice to Mormonism, and of collateral stress to his family. And it provides a unique look into Mormon history.

Much of his story comes from secondary and tertiary sources, the most interesting of which were produced by people who had little or no firsthand knowledge of his life. It is difficult to separate his legend from history, and there are many contradictions to evaluate. But I believe there is a kernel of truth in every legend, and a chance for error in every historical source, so my approach will be to lay it all out for you, the reader, candidly expressing my doubts and opinions and leaving you to create your own opinions.

Well, here goes.

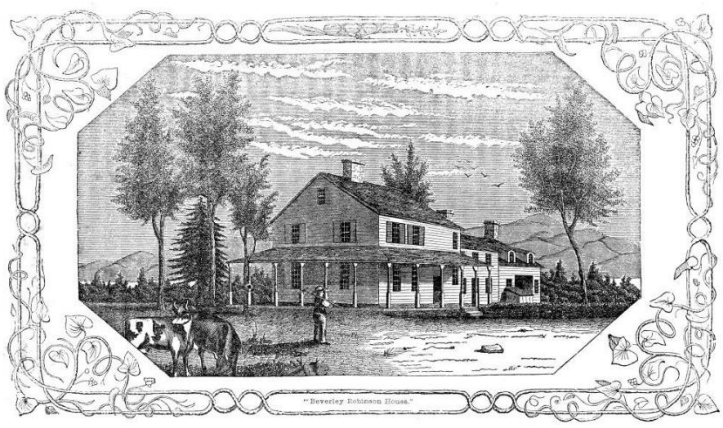
The name Sirrine has been written in literally scores of ways, as was typical for most non-English names in the largely illiterate American colonies, but it is probably of French Huguenot origin. The Huguenots were French Protestants, who began fleeing Catholic France around 1628 with the fall of La Rochelle. Many fled to England and many to the new world. This exodus took place over decades, and Dutch-controlled New York City received many French refugees.[2] When the village of New Harlem was laid out in 1648, nearly half of the 32 heads of its families were Huguenots. This flow did not stop when New Netherlands was surrendered to the English in 1664. Probably hundreds of thousands of Huguenots came to America including many from the French West Indies. Two names of early immigrants to New York, were Sorin and Suire, which could have become Sirrine. Dutchess County was one of the original 12 counties in the colony of New York in 1683, although it was not organized politically until 30 years later. In 1697, a wealthy Dutchman from the West Indies named Adolphus Philipse bought land in Dutchess County, which became Putnam County about 150 years later and contained the township of Philipstown. The new county was an "oblong" parallelogram shape[3] that spanned east from the Hudson River to the Connecticut border on the west, which remained privately owned by Philipse until it was confiscated from him during the Revolutionary War because he was a Tory.



Philipse himself did not actually live in the area, but subdivided it into four large townships for each of his four children, who did live there. Much of their land was leased out to tenant farmers during the next decades. The Sirrines and the Garrisons were likely some of these. In 1748 a wealthy Virginian named Colonel Beverley

[2] Ernest Freeland Griffin, *Westchester County and its People,* Vol I, New York City, 1946, p. 144-149.

[3] Map source is https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=38637419.



Robinson, who was actually a boyhood friend of George Washington, married Susanna Philipse, owner of the western quarter of the oblong. There they built a magnificent mansion which stood until around 1890 and had a rich history.

Sirrines appeared in Dutchess County as early as 1758, the year in which James Canopus Sirrine testified that he was born, "to the best of his memory." He was applying for a long-overdue military pension at the age of 102. There were fourteen possible Sirrines of various spellings found in Revolutionary War rosters including James, Jacob, Amos, John, Isaac, Charles, Israel, and Abraham. Most of these lived in Dutchess County, but also in neighboring Westchester and Orange counties.[4]

When the Revolutionary War began at Lexington and Concord in 1775, Mephibosheth's grandfather, Isaac Sirrine Sr., was 29 years old with two children under three. He served in the Dutchess County 7th Regiment of Militia under Colonel Henry Ludington in Captain Lane's company of men from the Township of Philipse, later known as Philipstown Township. Most of the men were from the "oblong" including Captain Lane. Every man between 16 and 50 was required to provide himself with musket, bayonet or tomahawk, ramrod, 23 rounds, 12 flints, and a knapsack or be fined. *"...In case of any alarm, invasion or insurrection, every man...was immediately to repair to...the home of his captain...(and) to march...straight to the scene...to oppose the enemy."*[5] The regiment contained 478 men, 55 of whom were in Capt. George Lane's Company. The militia could be called out whenever needed, for as long as needed, but for a term no longer than three months outside the colony. They were called about six times a year.

In August, 1776, Isaac Sirrine's unit was directed to march to Peekskill, and then to the Battle of White Plains in October to defend General George Washington's retreat from New York City. The militia accompanied the army to where Washington crossed the Hudson into New Jersey and stayed at Peekskill to defend Dutchess County against a significant Tory militia from that area.[6] Also, there was a fear among the colonists that in order to avoid the fort at West Point, General George Clinton would come up the east side of the Hudson (right through the Philipse grant oblong) with his regular army of

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[4] Hibbert, Larry E., *The Sirrine Family Legacy, The family of Isaac and Sarah Sirrine 1798,* Volume I, Sugar City, Idaho, 2003.

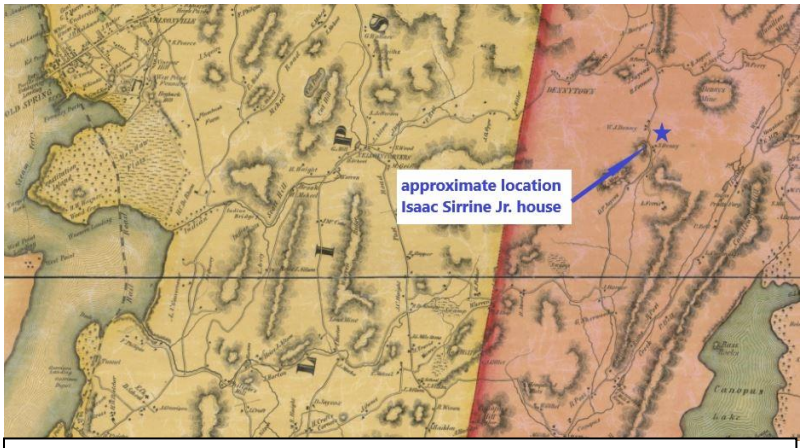
[5] Provincial Congress of New York, August 22, 1775.

[6] I was surprised to learn that in many colonies much of the fighting was between American Continental and Tory militias, not purely American vs. British regulars.

Redcoats. That fear eased when the British were defeated at Trenton, allowing the militia to go home for a while.

Mephibosheth's maternal grandfather, Abraham Garrison, was from the family village of Garrison on the southern border of the oblong, and like most residents of the township, he also served in the Revolutionary War. He was on the roster of the Dutchess County Militia, 7th Regiment, another member of Captain Lane's Company.

The British destroyed a Patriot supply post at the south end of Canopus Hollow on land owned by the Tory Col. Beverley Robinson. The post was called Continental Village and contained barracks housing 2,000 men close to Abraham Garrison's farm. Robinson's house, which was just across the Hudson River from West Point, was confiscated that year by the Continental Army. Benedict Arnold, the commanding officer at West Point, was living in that house in 1780 when his traitorous plan to surrender the fort to the British was discovered. His replacement, Major General Israel Putnam, also took up residence in Beverley House, and converted a wing to serve as a military hospital for officers. Washington was entertained there. After the war Mephibosheth's maternal grandfather, Abraham Garrison, served there as caretaker of the mansion. It was not far from the village of Garrison.



This map was created in 1848. It shows that the family was in the north end of Canopus Hollow and not in the town of Cold Spring. The diagonal red line is the border of Putnam Township, which was split off from Philipstown Township in 1839, probably after the family had moved.

After the war, Philipstown Township was organized in 1788 out of the Philipse grant, and the former Tory owners were exiled to England. Although Cold Spring, the largest village in the area is often given as the home of the Sirrines and Garrisons, actually that was not true in the early years. They lived about seven miles east of the Hudson River in the Catskill Mountains in what is called Upper Canopus Hollow. That area has now reverted to wilderness. A part of the Appalachia Trail runs right through it and the ancient hillside farms are obliterated by new timber growth.

About 1806, Mephibosheth's father Isaac Jr., age 23, who needed work and was looking for a wife, moved from his parents' home to about two miles east of Garrison, where he met Sarah Hannah Garrison. The 1810 Census shows Isaac Sirrine, his brother Peter, and Edward Hooper, Isaac's sister Abigail's husband, on consecutive

lines of the document, next-door neighbors, all living in upper Canopus Hollow close to their parents.

The next year on October 27, 1811 Mephibosheth Sirrine was born. Most family genealogical sources indicate that he was born in Cold Spring, Dutchess County, but that is only because it was the only actual town in Philipstown Township. However, in later years, the family did move to Cold Spring for work. In 1812 Dutchess County was divided, and the oblong, including Philipstown Township, became Putnam County, named after the Revolutionary War General Israel Putnam, who had commanded West Point.

Mephibosheth was the third of three boys. In 1811 his brother Abraham was three and John was 18 months old.

One Sirrine biographer gave this interesting sketch of life in Canopus Hollow.

> *Farms in Dutchess County consisted of several structures...including a house for the family and other buildings, such as barns, a smokehouse, and a woodshed. The one-room house construction was typically of fieldstone, wooden planks, or bricks made on the farm. At the heart of the house was a large, central fireplace, which supplied the only means of heat (and was) where all the cooking was done. Regardless of the season, the fire was never allowed to die out, since it was difficult to rekindle. All main domestic activities occurred in the central area—cooking spinning, sewing eating, candle making, and depending upon the size of the home it might have included a loom.*
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> *Located in a corner of the large room was the parents' bed, which was usually screened or curtained, under which were stored trundle beds for the younger children. Babies either slept with their parents or in cradles near the fire. Older children slept in a loft above the main room, on feather beds under feather comforters. Quilts were seldom utilitarian, but rather were considered decorative....Since there was no means of refrigeration, smoking and drying meats and fish were ways of preservation. Pieces of meat were wrapped in cloth during the cold winters and buried in the grain bin in the barn, where they would freeze. Meat from very large animals would sometimes be shared between neighbors in order that it not spoil. Apart from bear and venison, squirrel, rabbit, and other small animals that regularly foraged in farmers' gardens were plentiful.*
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> *...Simple personal hygiene was not practiced. Clothes were washed in the summer after children took them off, having worn the same things since fall. Baths were seldom taken, and hand washing was not common. Girls slept in their petticoats and camisole tops, after removing their long skirts....*
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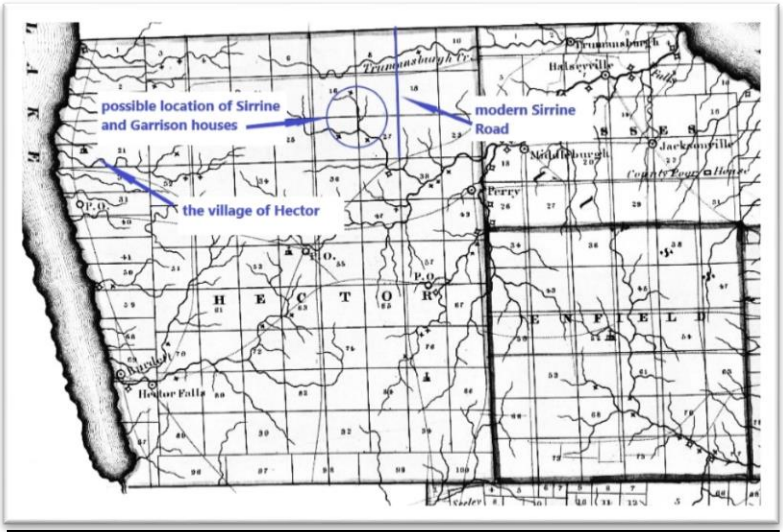
> *Barn raisings, building stone walls, plowing large plots, attending church, weddings, christenings, and funerals were all occasions for social gatherings, where neighbors and extended families joined together...It was common for*

young people to marry early, usually to someone from the same general locale, and logically from a neighboring farm....[7]

In 1815, Mephibosheth's maternal grandfather, Abraham Garrison, moved with most of his large family 220 miles west to Hector Township in Seneca County, where new land was being granted to war veterans. His son Justus had moved there three years earlier.[8] The township was situated on the east shore of Seneca Lake and extended east toward Cayuga Lake nearly to Trumansburg. During the Revolutionary War, General Sullivan with 5,000 soldiers had pushed out the Indians in 1779. When the war had ended, his men and many other veterans returned over time to live there. I have been able to identify at least three other families from Putnam County[9] living in Hector at that time including Jacob Banker, Thomas Searles, and William Jaycox, whose family had married into the Sirrines. The 1820 census showed 1,364 households living in the township.



1829 map of Hector Township, the largest in the state of New York, containing about 100 mi^2. By this time the family's house had burned down.

And Mephibosheth's father Isaac Sirrine, Jr., whose wife Sarah was Abraham's daughter, had his eye on the area as well. One descendant, Fred H. M. Dunseith wrote: "*Great grandfather Sirrine (Isaac Jr.) was of a roving disposition. He went overland into central New York...three times, clearing a tract and coming back again to Putnam County. These trips were done over land...it took three weeks to go from New York to Ithaca."* Perhaps he went each summer to prepare land for a move, but a move was not to happen for a few more years.

Two years later in 1817 Hector became a part of the new Tompkins County, which was created from Broome, Cayuga, and Seneca Counties, and named after New York governor Daniel D. Tompkins, who had left office that year to become Vice President of the United States for the two terms of James Monroe. While serving as governor Tompkins had famously funded the New York militia in the War of 1812 out of his own

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[7] Surine, Carolyn, *The Surine –Sirrine Family*, Oswego, New York, 1987-2003, page 24.

[8] According to Larry Hibbert's research, the family of Abraham Garrison moved to Hector in 1815 with the following members: Samuel, Jane, Catherine, Susan, John and Judith. Justus Garrison and his family moved had moved there in 1812, and Martha Garrison Warren and family arrived eight years after her parents arrived in 1815. Reference in footnote 4.

[9] Putnam County was created when the "oblong" was carved out of Dutchess County in 1812.

pocket whenever the legislature was not in session or would not approve the necessary funds. He died fiscally insolvent at the age of 50 of alcoholism shortly after his second term as Vice President.

It would be six more years before Isaac Sirrine moved his family from Philipstown to Hector. With him were his wife Sarah and seven children. Mephibosheth was 12. His older brothers, Abraham and John were 14 and 15. George, Seth, and Joel were four, five, and seven. Hannah Frances, the only girl, was going on two and Sarah was possibly pregnant with Isaac, who was born sometime in 1823.

Warren LeRoy Sirrine

There are various accounts of how this move happened. Much of the information we have on Mephibosheth comes from LeRoy Sirrine's colorful writing,[10] which is long on drama and sometimes imprecise in facts and dates, but full of interesting details and stories. LeRoy was Mephibosheth's nephew, the son and biographer of George Warren Sirrine. LeRoy never met Mephibosheth personally, but was full of the yarns spun by his pioneering father. Implying that financial need was at the root of the move to Hector, LeRoy wrote:

> (Isaac) *Sirrine* (Jr.) *thought that any one that fought in the Revolutionary War was all right and signed notes for any of them and he had a great many of them to pay. So he soon found out that he was broke and all that he had was a big Prairie Schooner wagon and four yoke of oxen, a wife and a wagon load of children.*

The biographer of Mephibosheth's older brother John was his granddaughter, Laura Rudy, of Trumansburg, which is just a few miles east of Hector. Her account of the trip is much more detailed, and seems more credible.

> *In January, 1823, Mr. and Mrs. Isaac Sirrine (Sarah Garrison), with their nine children and all of their worldly possessions, left home in a sleigh drawn by a single pair of horses, crossed the Hudson River at Newburgh and started on their long journey westward, their destination being "Shin Hollow," now Trumansburg. All went well at first, the Newburgh Turnpike, a recently surveyed road, was followed to a point about 100 miles east of here, when one of the horses went lame. They were in a wilderness with no habitation near, and it was impossible to proceed with one horse. The two eldest boys, Abraham and John...volunteered to continue the journey on foot...the snow lay deep in the forests, settlements were few and far between; but the lads made the journey*

[10] Sirrine, Warren LeRoy, *The Life of George Warren Sirrine,* Church History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah , Call Number MS 11229.

> *safely and succeeded in securing the services of a man and horse to return for the family, they remaining in the meantime with friends.*[11]

The inconsistencies between the two stories are typical of the family accounts, as you will see in most of the following examples as well. But there always seems to be an element of truth in each family account, which can often be found through comparison with other stories and available facts.

Both writers seem to have been unaware of the multiple family members and neighbors who had preceded the family to Hector. And their destination was probably not Trumansburg,[12] although that is where Abraham and John eventually settled. It is hard to imagine why the family would try to make such a trip during the New York winter. Perhaps financial pressures were a part of it. And there were only seven children. Four more would be born later.

At that time the village of Hector[13] was surrounded by forests for many miles, and contained a grist-mill, store, blacksmith-shop, log hotel, and five or six log houses. The primitive houses were built of unhewn logs for walls, the roofs being made of clapboards, and held down by heavy poles, as they used no nails. The floors were made of logs, split and hewn. The battens of the doors were made of ash, and fastened by wooden pins. The window was a hole cut in the side of the house, and frequently curtained by a table-cloth, secured in its place by forks. Their door-latches were of wood, raised by a tow or leather string, which could be drawn in at night.[14]

The New York census dated April 8, 1825 showed the Isaac Sirrine family in Hector consisting of eight males and two females. Samuel Duncan Sirrine was born four days later. One question in the census was "*How many children have been born in the previous year*." To this, the enumerator wrote that one female had been born, from which we can deduce that a baby girl was born in 1824, who must have died shortly after birth. The census also reported that the family had a cow and a hog. Sarah had manufactured 100 yards of linen and cotton that year.

The opening of the Erie Canal on October 25, 1825 transformed America, and its influence on western New York was immense. For the Sirrines it became possible to travel by boat up Seneca Lake to the canal and from there to Buffalo, Ohio, and Michigan via the Great Lakes. Michigan opened up to settlement, inviting hordes of New Englanders and especially New Yorkers.

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[11] Rudy, Laura, *John Sirrine,* Trumansburg Free Press and Sentinel, January 15, 1926.

[12] Trumansburg was just a few miles east of Hector.

[13] Hector is a township as well as a village. Isaac's family settled in the township about 10 miles east of the village of Hector and only about four to five miles west of the town of Trumansburg. Isaac's sons John and Abraham eventually settled in Trumansburg and nearby Ulysses.

[14] *Town of Hector History*, pub. 1879, History of Tioga, Chemung, Tompkins & Schuyler Counties, NY Published by Everts & Ensign, 1879.

When Mephibosheth was fifteen years old a tragedy struck the family. The several accounts vary in particulars.

According to Laura Rudy,

> *The family settled in the Barber neighborhood in a log house, in which they lived until the building burned four years later. By this fire two of the younger boys lost their lives.*

In LeRoy Sirrine's version, *"...three children...burned up in a fire on Christmas Eve."* Other Sirrine family records recorded the event. The year of the catastrophe, when given, varies between 1827 and 1830, and so does the number of children (all boys) who were lost, varying from one to three. Several accounts support LeRoy's date of Christmas Eve.

Fred J. M. Dunseith, a grandson of Hannah Frances, Isaac and Sarah's only daughter to reach adulthood, wrote this in 1934:

> *Your great grandfather Sirrine often imbibed too freely and on three occasions when under the influences of his excesses set fire to the house. During one of these occasions, a log house in central New York near Trumansburg burned and three of the children were lost. I have heard my grandmother tell of the pitch falling, a fire on the bed, when her brothers came in and carried her out. She was then but a very small child.*

Cynthia Della Sirrine Hibbert, daughter of Mephibosheth's younger brother George Warren Sirrine, who was eight years old at the time of the fire, wrote that her father told her:

> *The older brother had been left alone to tend the children. The fireplace was the cause of the fire, and when the boy found that he could not stop the fire, he carried each one of the children out, and lastly discovered the baby was still in the house. He rushed in and got the baby, and when he was nearly out, the floor broke and he dropped the baby. The other little ones tried to crawl back in and he would have to keep them out. This brother finally got out, but died from bad burn(s) right afterwards. His only regret was that he couldn't get the baby out. The little bones were found later.*

After I had collected these various versions I was working on another matter, when I accidentally ran across a brief notice in a Rhode Island newspaper dated January 26, 1827. It stated:

> *Serrine, Isaac. His house burnt and two of his children perished and one so badly burnt that he lived but a few hours, at Hector N.Y.*

And so, putting all these stories together, here is my conclusion. The fire occurred on Christmas Eve, 1826, when the parents and the three oldest brothers, Abraham age 18,

John age 16, and Mephibosheth age 15 were away.[15] Eleven year old Joel was tending the six younger children. He got them all out of the house except the infant Benjamin and perhaps three year old Isaac. The baby died immediately and Joel died a few hours later from his burns. Whether it was two children or three that died remains uncertain. I think the newspaper article can be read either way. If Isaac survived the fire, he probably died young from some other cause, for no further genealogical data has been found for him.

As I thought about the impact of this tragedy on the Sirrine family, it was encouraging for me to reflect on the family support that they must have received from Sarah's Garrison relatives. It is possible that the older brothers and parents were away socializing with some of them when the fire occurred. Abraham Garrison had died at least six years earlier,[16] but sixty year old Grandma Hannah Nelson Garrison was living close by with her daughters Susan and Judith, who were in their early 20's and still unmarried. Sarah Sirrine also had four married siblings living in Hector at the time. Justus and his wife Phebe had ten children and their eleventh child was born on January 8, 1827 just two weeks after the tragic fire. Samuel, Catherine, and Martha also lived nearby, each with multiple children in the same age range as the Sirrine children.

Most of the Sirrine family genealogists have assumed that the fire occurred later, perhaps as late as 1830, and some have suggested that discouragement over the tragedy led to the return of the Sirrines with their younger children to their previous home of Dutchess County. If the fire caused them to return to their ancestral home, it makes sense to me that they would have left soon afterwards, sometime in 1827. I think they returned with just the three youngest surviving children, George, age eight, Hannah Frances, age six, and Samuel, age two.

LeRoy Sirrine leaves an interesting hint in his biography of his father, George Warren Sirrine.

> *G.W. Sirrine was born at Cold Springs, Putnam County, New York State on the 6th of December, 1818 and lived in the Beverley House or the Robison house or the Haunted House. And when he was old enough he always wanted to go with his father and watch him work. He was a millwright by profession and was living in N.Y.C.*

Let's unpack that a bit. The second sentence definitely refers to the time after the family returned from Hector when George would have been about nine. If they lived in the Beverley Robinson House, his mother had probably taken over Grandpa Abraham Garrison's former job as caretaker of the mansion. Isaac was building mills all around

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[15] Hearing that the fire happened on Christmas Eve, my first thought was that the Christmas candles had gotten out of control, but I have learned that putting lighted candles on Christmas trees did not begin until the middle of the 19th century.

[16] Hannah Garrison was living alone next door to her son Justus in the 1820 census.

the area and was at that time living in New York City. Unfortunately, there currently exists very little hard data on the activities of the family over the following decade or more, especially for Isaac and Sarah, who are curiously absent from the census in 1830 and 1840. Perhaps his profession kept him so on the move that his absence from the census counts is understandable.

However, the older boys seem not to have gone back to Philipstown with them, at least not immediately.

Abraham, the oldest boy, never moved from Tomkins County. He married Salina P. Stillwell when he was 32 years old and had two sons. When Salina died in 1848, Abraham married her cousin Sophia Stillwell, had a daughter, and then divorced in 1866 and lived out the rest of his life in Hector Township and Trumansburg.

Mephibosheth's brothers John and Seth went together to Michigan in 1828 by way of the canals and lakes, spent the winter, and then both returned to Philipstown in the spring. The timing of this trip suggests to me that the rest of the family had already returned to Putnam County. Then John returned to Michigan two years later and took up 160 acres of government land. During that time Seth probably lived in Philipstown with his parents. He married Joanna Shuragar in Putnam County in 1844. They had a baby boy named Irvin, who died at the age of nine months. Seth himself died two months before his son.

Property records show that John continued to live in Hector until about 1835. After that, he worked as a carpenter in various places including New York City, where he lived for a year before marrying Nancy Smith in Philipstown in November of 1836. The couple moved from there to John's property in Michigan for two more years before going back to New York City, where they lived until 1846.

But what about Mephibosheth? Well, this is where the story gets interesting. And complicated.

I have no reliable sources on Mephibosheth for the period of time between 1827 and 1835. His age during that time was 16 to 24 years. So we will have to depend on logical assumptions and on incomplete, conflicting accounts by his descendants. Bear with me while we work through this.

First, although I do not know for sure where he was, I think that he remained in Hector for a time, possibly living with his older brother Abraham, working on his farm. He may have been interested in religion. There is no doubt that Hector was involved in the religious revival movement of that time, just like the rest of upstate New York. Laura Rudy wrote that Mephibosheth's brother John had taken an interest in religion at an early age, just as Joseph Smith and his family had done.

> *When a boy living in Hector, (John) became converted under the preachings of an itinerant Methodist evangelist, and from that time until his death he took a deep interest in religious affairs... (The Bible) he literally devoured..."*

Knowing Mephibosheth's later history I am fairly certain that he too had an interest in religion. And he must have had some exposure to Mormonism in his teenage years.

Joseph Smith and his father Joseph Smith, Sr. made their first trip from Manchester to Harmony, Pennsylvania the month that the Erie Canal opened in 1826. Their route probably went right through Fayette and Hector Township. In the years during which Joseph was translating the *Book of Mormon* he would have passed through Hector many times, and Joseph and Emma Smith lived with the Peter Whitmer family in Fayette for six months in 1830, which was about 22 miles from Hector. Although I have no proof of any interaction between the Sirrine and Smith families, I think it is entirely possible that the Smiths even stayed overnight at times in Hector or Trumansburg on the trip back and forth. There is no doubt that the events of early Mormonism were well known throughout the region. Joseph Smith wrote of that time in 1830 right after the Mormon Church was organized, "*Many believers in Seneca County were baptized.*"[17] Could Mephibosheth have been among them? He was 19 years old then.

He did become a Mormon. There is no doubt about that—history shows that he later became a successful and dedicated missionary. It could have happened in 1830, but my theory is that it happened a few years later. I'll try to support that contention as we go.

There was another possible reason for Mephibosheth to stay in Tomkins County: a girlfriend.

About midway between Hector and Fayette lay a village called Ovid, where a family named Wheeler lived. They were very early settlers from New Jersey, who had moved to Tompkins County in 1797. James Wheeler, the patriarch of the family, was a Revolutionary War veteran and probably settled in Ovid to claim a land grant. He brought eight children including a daughter named Mariah,[18] who was seventeen years old in 1827 and probably well known to Mephibosheth.

In the spring of 1833 James Wheeler moved from Ovid, Seneca County to Lenawee County, Michigan where he purchased 200 acres from Captain James Whitney just west of the Raisin River, now within the city limits of Adrian. Mariah had five older married siblings with children who went to Michigan with their father. She, her younger sister Emeline, and her 14 year old brother Charles went as well. By this time, Mariah was 23 and single.

Now I'm going to relate a couple of tales, which were told by LeRoy Sirrine, Mephibosheth's nephew. Having read all 25 pages of LeRoy's yarns about his family, I know that LeRoy loved to tell a good story with many inconsistencies and exaggerations. LeRoy never met Mephibosheth, having been born seven years after his uncle's death, and he did not write this material before 1878, probably not before

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[17] Bushman, Richard Lyman, *Joseph Smith, Rough Stone Rolling,* Alfred A. Knopf, 2005, p.77.

[18] Sirrine genealogies call her Mariah and the Wheeler family calls her Maria.

1900. He was telling stories that he had heard from his father, George Warren Sirrine, or from Mephibosheth's oldest daughter, Helen, who lived briefly in George's family, but moved out of the home around 1855, the same year that LeRoy was born. So at best, his information was second hand and decades old.

But could this one be true, at least parts of it? This is much more complex to reconcile than the stories of the house fire, but let's see whether we can make some sense of it.

LeRoy wrote:

> *The Prophet Joseph Smith was quite an athlete. So was Mephibosheth and they got to be quite chummy. Boshia was living in N.Y.C. and was sick in bed and the prophet Joseph went in to see him. And he said "Bosh" get up. I have got a mission for you. And Bosh said Brother Joseph I am so weak that I can hardly raise my hand to my head. He told the people...to get him a bite to eat and pack his suitcase for he was going on a mission. He told his companion to anoint him with oil. Then they administered to him and the Prophet Joseph promised him in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ that it would not be but a few minutes until he would be walking as good as he ever did.*

If there is any truth to this story at all, and I believe there is, Joseph Smith and Mephibosheth must have been acquainted, at least at some point. When could the healing have taken place? It is known that "Bosha" was in New York City at various times of his life, as we will learn as this story progresses. But when was Joseph Smith there? After studying the prophet's life, I have found only one time that he visited that city. If he healed and sent Mephibosheth on a mission from there, it had to be in late October of 1832 when Mephibosheth was 21 years old.

The prophet was in New York at that time because he had received a revelation in Kirtland, Ohio instructing Bishop Newel K. Whitney to warn the eastern cities of *"the desolation and utter abolishment which awaits them if they do reject these things."*[19] Joseph believed that one of the signs of the impending desolation of the eastern cities was the horrible cholera epidemic which had struck New York that summer. As of July 31, 1832 there were 3,731 cases which had resulted in 1,520 deaths.

Joseph Smith accompanied Bishop Whitney on the trip, first visiting Albany. In New York City they met with Episcopal Bishop Benjamin T. Onderdonk. They stayed on Pearl Street, just below Wall Street, from where Joseph wrote Emma a long and informative letter.[20] He told Emma of taking a remarkable walk through the city and how he felt like Jonah warning the proud inhabitants. He found the people showing *"iniquity upon their every countenance although their dress makes them look fair."* Still, his "*bowels were filled with compassion towards them. There was little cholera left among"* them by then. The rest of the New York stay seems to have been devoted to

[19] D&C 84:114

[20] https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-emma-smith-13-october-1832/1#full-transcript.

accompanying Newel K. Whitney selecting goods and to lift up his voice against the city. After his walk, the Prophet spent most of his time in his room reading and enjoying the Holy Spirit. They then hurried home to Kirtland, arriving barely in time to attend the birth of Emma's fourth child Joseph, the first of their children to live more than a few days.

In Joseph's letter to Emma and in his account of the visit[21] there was no mention of Mephibosheth. In fact, I could see nothing to indicate that he healed or visited anyone except a *"butiful* (sic) *young gentleman from Jersey"* who had survived the cholera, and with whom Joseph had talked until late at night. But if Joseph Smith did heal Mephibosheth on that occasion, most of LeRoy's story could be accurate.

LeRoy was right in at least one respect. Around 1833 Mephibosheth went to Michigan on his own private mission. It was probably not an official church mission, such as the prolonged experience that began in 1838, and I have found no mention of it in Mormon church records. His mission was to go to Michigan for his bride.

Another problem with LeRoy's story is that according to the writings of Parley P. Pratt and also by the report of the first British missionaries, when they visited the city before boarding ship for England that same year, it was not until 1837 that there were any Mormons in New York City except Elijah Fordham. That would seem to exclude Mephibosheth. Also, Mephibosheth's church mission to Michigan did not begin until August 7, 1838.[22]

And now I return to LeRoy's story of the Prophet healing Bosha in New York City. After healing him, Joseph gave Mephibosheth a prophecy:

> *...when he got to the end of his mission that he would get permission from the school trustees to speak in the schoolhouse. And he would have a nice audience and that there was a Lady living there and that she had a daughter that was grown and she was well educated and that they would be there and hear his first sermon. He told Bosha that he would have a good house full and the Lady would ask him to go home with them and have dinner...*

Later, in Lenawee County that prophecy would come true.

> *Then he went* (on his mission to Michigan) *and when he got to the end of his journey he got permission to speak in the school house. So he put up some notices that he would preach the next morning at 10 A.M. in the school house. There was 50 or 75 people came to hear him preach and he had just opened his meeting and started to preach when he looked up the aisle and saw two ladies coming down the aisle and they took the first seat from him. And the young lady opened up a tablet and started to take his sermon down in shorthand. He said he never felt so much like speaking in his life. The words would come to him faster than he could speak them. Then he thought of what the Prophet Joseph*

[21] Bushman, Richard Lyman, *Joseph Smith, Rough Stone Rolling*, Random House, 2005. p. 188-9.
[22] *Times and Seasons*, Vol. I, p.73.

> *Smith had told him and when the meeting was over all of the people in the house seemed to want to go home except the two ladies. And they came up on the stand where Mephibosheth was and the older Lady introduced herself and then her daughter and wanted Bosh to go home with them and have dinner with them, and as long as he was in that part of the country to make their home his home, as they had plenty of room and plenty to make him comfortable as long as he would stay. Several months afterward he married the girl and she was the mother of Theodore Sirrine, Parley Sirrine and Helen Sirrine. And Helen Sirrine married William Barnett.*

That girl was, of course, Mariah Wheeler. I suppose it is possible that she heard him speaking in a church service, but I think it more likely that LeRoy confounded the true story of meeting Mariah in Michigan with Mephibosheth's traditional mission several years later. And if Mephibosheth was on an official mission in 1833, it did not last very long. They were married soon after his arrival. Mission accomplished. They were probably married at her home in Michigan, but they were gone before the birth of their first child, Helen Sirrine. All of Helen's census records give her birth place as the state of New York, mostly giving the year of 1835. One of them specifically states that she was born in Brooklyn, Kings, New York in 1834.[23]

I am reasonably sure that Mariah and Mephibosheth lived in New York during the next four years, most of the time in New York City itself. In the New York City register for 1836, Mephibosheth was listed as a carpet weaver living at 253 Delancey, which is on the lower East Side of Manhattan. The following year he was also registered as a carpet weaver, this time at 126 Perry St. in Greenwich Village.[24]

Mephibosheth's brother, John, was living in New York in 1835 with his young family, and so was his young brother George, at least some of the time, and also his father, Isaac, although none of them showed up in the register.

In the meantime, Michigan was becoming an important place for settlement as well as for missionary work. Michigan had become a territory in 1805, but was wild and undeveloped. In 1818, McComb County was created out of Wayne, and then Oakland County from McComb in 1820. The first land entry in Oakland County was by Stephen Mack for the Pontiac Company on November 6, 1820. The name Mack seemed to ring a bell for me, so I researched the man. He turned out to be none other than the older brother of Lucy Mack Smith, mother of the Prophet. She wrote a whole chapter on Stephen Mack in her son's biography.[25]

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[23] Iowa, Pottawattamie County, Annotated Record of U.S. Census, 1850, Ancestral File; FamilySearch.

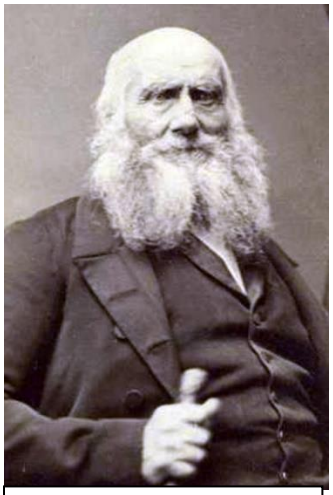
[24] New York Register and City Directory for the Sixty-Second Year of American Independence. Thomas Longworth, Clerk's office, District Court of the Southern District of NY.

[25] Proctor, Scot Facer and Proctor, Maurine Jensen, *The Revised and Enhanced History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, Bookcraft, 1996, Chapter 4.

1820 was the year in which settlement of Michigan began in earnest, mainly from New England and especially from upstate New York. In 1822, Lenawee and Washtenaw counties were formed. They were to be the main areas of Mephibosheth's mission. The opening of the Erie Canal in 1825 was gasoline to the fire of Michigan settlement, allowing New Englanders to cheaply travel clear to Detroit by water.

On June 7, 1831 a revelation[26] to Joseph Smith commanded his brother Hyrum and John Murdock to take a detour to Detroit to preach while on their way to Jackson County, Missouri. His mother Lucy Mack Smith accompanied them. Temperance Mack, David Dort, and several others were converted by their teaching, but the missionaries came too late for Stephen Mack, who had died several years earlier. Lucy was there for four weeks. During that time she met Reverend Isaac Ruggles of the Congregational Church, clashed with him, and promised him that a third of his church including a deacon would be taken from him. Soon Joseph Smith sent Lyman Wight and John Corrill to Michigan as reinforcements. A short time later, Samuel Bent, Deacon in the Congregational Church in Pontiac, was baptized. Deacon Bent was excommunicated by Ruggles for embracing Mormonism on Feb 9, 1832.

Lucy Mack Smith



Elijah Fordham

One of the early converts to the Mormon faith in Michigan was Elijah Fordham, who was baptized in the town of Clinton River near Pontiac Michigan by Elder Fosdick (probably Jabez G. Fosdick). Fordham moved to Kirtland, and was ordained a Seventy by Joseph Smith. In 1834, Hyrum Smith was sent by wagon to Michigan with Lyman Wight to recruit for Zion's camp. They picked up Milo Andrus on the way in Florence, Ohio. In Pontiac, 15 members of the Huron Branch volunteered including Elijah Fordham, his nine year old son George, There were nine men, three women, and three children in the camp. They added Charles C. Rich to their number as they passed through Pleasant Grove, Illinois, and they joined Joseph Smith's group on June 9th in Missouri.

After Zion's Camp had disbanded, Joseph Smith and the leading church officers traveled by steamboat to speak to the church members in Pontiac, Michigan, especially the several who had accompanied Hyrum to join the Zion's Camp. They arrived October 20th on the stage coach from Detroit.

[26] D&C Section 52.

Elijah Fordham was a carpenter from N.Y.C. and returned there around 1836 to work in the trade with his father, who owned a carpentry shop and a large warehouse. That is when he was mentioned as "the only Mormon in New York City" by the early British Missionaries. Fordham arranged for them to sleep in his father's warehouse for a week or so while they waited for the ship to depart. They forwarded 180 *Timely Warnings* pamphlets to the ministers in the city before leaving on July 1, 1837.

About a week later, Parley P. Pratt arrived with his new bride[27] Mary Ann Frost, her four year old daughter Mary Ann Stearns, and his infant son Parley and hooked up with Elder Fordham as a missionary companion. He wrote,

> *"Late in July I arrived in the City of New York on a Mission. I took lodging and commenced to speak and write."*

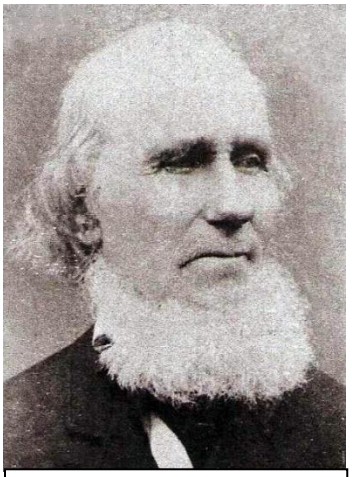
Parley P. Pratt

They met with a tiny group of members in an upper room on Goerch St. One of these was an earnest man named Wandle Mace, who had met Elder Pratt in October, 1837. After miracle healings performed by Elders Pratt and Fordham, Theodore Curtis, Ann Shaffer, Mrs. Dexter, her daughter, and Wandle Mace's wife were baptized in the East River by P.P. Pratt. Wandle Mace was baptized a short time later. Curtis had been in Mace's Methodist study group.

Later that winter, Elder Pratt began to feel discouraged, having only baptized six people in six months, and was planning to transfer himself to New Orleans. In a farewell meeting he gathered his little branch in the upper room in which they had been holding services for a prayer meeting. There they experienced a remarkable outpouring of the spirit, in which Elder Pratt was commanded to remain in New York City, for there would be an immediate opportunity for many more baptisms. David Rogers was one of the converts in the room, and his heart was touched. He made chairs, fitted out a room, and in the next three weeks the elders had received fifteen preaching invitations. They preached eleven times a week and proselytized door to door, baptizing almost daily all winter and spring. There were

[27] Pratt's first wife, Thankful Halsey, had died just four months earlier at the birth of their only child together. For a child's view of that year in New York City I recommend reading Mary Ann Stearns' autobiography posted on FamilySearch https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/memories/KWJR-T8Y .

many healings. Branches were formed at Sing Sing, Jersey, Brooklyn, and various parts of Long Island.



Wandle Mace

In April, 1838, Parley P. Pratt left New York with a small colony of his newly baptized saints headed to Missouri, where the Kirtland saints were gathering at Far West. His brother Orson Pratt replaced him, ordained Wandle Mace an Elder, and made Mace the president of the first branch in N.Y.C. Orson and his wife and child moved in to live with the Mace family. The recent convert Theodore Curtis was made an Elder in March and became Orson's mission companion.

Wilford Woodruff's first visit to the city was on May 18, 1838. He wrote *"There had been about 100 baptized and many of them were present"* at a new meeting place on Varich Street between Van Dall's and Carlton. I suspect that Mephibosheth and Mariah were among the newly baptized members.[28] I have not been able to find a list of the new members, but Mephibosheth's name appeared in the excellent autobiography of the newly minted Branch President Mace, who wrote:

> *This was the first branch of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to be organized in New York City. It was composed of persons like myself, all young in the Church and they (were) very backward or diffident in speaking in public, consequently most of the labor of preaching the gospel fell upon me.*

Let me interrupt here to emphasize his point that the branch members were all young in the church, like himself. Aside from the two missionaries, none of them had been members before the previous November. That probably included Mephibosheth, which is further evidence that he was probably not baptized back in 1830 while he was living near Fayette.

Elder Mace continued:

> *We held meeting three times on Sunday and one meeting during the week. My time was fully occupied. I attended to my mechanical labor as usual as well as preaching the gospel on the Sabbath three times and also during the week. I found no time for rest and began to feel the necessity of a change. Brother M. Sirrine proposed that I go on a visit with him to the home of his parents in the Catskill Mountains and I accepted his invitation and started upon a short mission.*

[28] I suspect that Mephibosheth and Mariah were baptized by Parley P. Pratt and Theodore Curtis, for they named their two sons after them.

Note that M. Sirrine was referred to as Brother, not Elder. In those days those titles mattered. This is another piece of evidence to me that Mephibosheth was not yet a missionary. Continuing,

> *We took passage on a steamer as far as Mattawan, a small town opposite the town of Fishkill, which is on the west side of the Hudson River.* (Actually both are on the east side of the river.) *We proceeded at once to the house of Mr. Sirrine, a short distance from Mattawan, up in the mountains. Arriving there in the middle of the afternoon, Brother M. Sirrine introduced me to his parents who received me very cordially. His mother, Mrs. Sirrine, was a very peculiar woman. When any of her family were absent, and without any communication from them, she was always apprised of their return by some means unknown to them. She would make preparations to receive them just as any mother would do when hearing directly from them. So she had prepared for our coming.*
>
> *When the welcomes and greetings were over, Mrs. Sirrine took her son aside and inquired of him if his friend was a preacher. He answered, "Yes, he is from the city of New York, here on a short mission." She was somewhat surprised at his answer although she had expected her son in the company of a preacher. My appearance disappointed her, it did not meet her ideal of a preacher. We stayed with them that night and preached to them the gospel. They accepted the principles we taught as the truth of the Bible.*

Mace described the home of the Sirrines as “up in the mountains” which suggests that they were living in their old home in upper Canopus Hollow, not in the town of Cold Springs. If that was the same house that they left to go to Hector, LeRoy’s story of their bankruptcy may not be true. Perhaps they were in the former home of Isaac’s father. Both of his parents had passed on by then. It was an interesting observation that Elder Mace made regarding the spiritual sensitivity of Sarah Sirrine regarding her children. And again he referred to Mephibosheth as “Brother” rather than “Elder,” and seemed to take the lead in teaching the gospel to the family. This suggests that the Sirrines had not previously been taught by missionaries—nor by Mephibosheth.

I wonder who else may have been present at the meeting at the Sirrine home. Mephibosheth’s siblings George, age 19, Hannah Frances, age 17, and Samuel, age 13, were probably living at home at the time, and may have been there for the visit. Both George and Samuel eventually joined the Mormon Church, but probably not at that time. Although Mace reported that the Sirrines accepted the principles that he taught them, neither of Mephibosheth’s parents ever became Mormons. According to LeRoy Sirrine’s account, their only daughter, Hannah Frances, was antagonistic toward the Church, and opposed George when he later announced that he was joining. Abraham was living in Hector. Seth was probably living in Cold Spring at that time.[29] The other brother, John, was definitely living in Cold Spring with his wife and infant daughter, and

[29] Seth was living in Philipstown in the 1840 census.

may also have attended the meeting. It is noteworthy that eight years later in 1846 John and his family accompanied the newly baptized George Warren Sirrine to San Francisco with Sam Brannon's congregation of 238 Mormons on the ship *Brooklyn,* although John remained a non-Mormon.[30]

After the meeting with the Sirrines, Mephibosheth and Wandle Mace held meetings in nearby Matteawan and Fishkill, where they filled meetinghouses and healed the sick before returning to New York City. But it appears that the venture of Mephibosheth and Elder Mace up the river produced no baptisms. They were not in back for long in New York City before the Apostle Orson Hyde ordained Mephibosheth an Elder and sent him on a mission which would last six years. On August 5, 1838 Mephibosheth Sirrine took his wife Mariah, their three year old daughter, Helen, and probably a one year old boy back to Michigan.[31] They went straight to Lenawee County, the home of Mariah's parents and several of her siblings.

Just a month later, Branch President Mace and David W. Rogers with their families left the little New York Branch "to build up Zion." He wrote:

> *I took with me in my wagon, Brother David W. Rogers and family consisting of seven persons, viz. David W. Rogers' wife and five children. I had three good horses, a wide-track wagon with projecting sides, and good covers. I shipped my goods by water to Richmond, Missouri. Elder Orson Pratt, president of the mission, accompanied us across the river and travelled some distance with us.*

This was an important time period for the Church. While the Mace and Rogers families were driving their shared wagon down the National Highway toward Far West, Missouri they received news that required them to re-work all their plans. On October 5, 1838 David Patten, President of the Quorum of the Twelve, was shot and killed at Crooked River. Governor Lilburn Boggs of Missouri issued the infamous extermination order on October 27th. October 30, 1838 was the Hawn's Mill massacre. On, December 1st Joseph Smith and other church leaders were thrown into Liberty Jail. They did not escape until April 15, 1839, and were re-united with their families at Quincy on April 22nd.

Mace and Rogers were unaware of these events until they crossed the Wabash River into Illinois at the edge of the Grand Prairie.

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[30] In 1848 John Sirrine was living in New York, working as a carpenter, when his health failed. Doctors recommended a sea voyage as the only possible means of prolonging his life. He signed on with *The Brooklyn*, made a fortune in real estate and the gold fields in San Francisco, and returned around 1850 to New York a wealthy man. He paid $8,000 in gold for a farm in Trumansburg, Tompkins County. The cure must have worked incredibly well, for he lived there to the age of 91.

[31] In the 1840 census at Superior, Washtenaw, Michigan, two boys under the age of five were reported in the household of M. Serrine. One of these was Theodore, who was born in 1839. There must have been another boy, whose name is not known, who was born between 1836 and 1838, and died before 1844.

> *At this place we heard that there was some difficulty in Missouri and that the Mormons were being driven from that state of Missouri, this was the first news we had of these troubles. The next day we travelled through Springfield and on to Quincy. On the bank of the Mississippi River, it was the coldest night we had experienced on the long journey. We arrived here on the 11th day of November, 1838, just two months from the time we left the city of New York.*

They rented a house in Quincy and Mace did all that he could to assist the saints who were fleeing across the Mississippi River from Missouri. His goods had been shipped to Richmond, Missouri, so he ordered them sent to Quincy, where he set up his lathe and opened his business. He was a trained wheelwright and an inventor with several patents, including the first street sweeping machine in New York City.[32]

In January, 1839 a relocation committee was formed, chaired by William Huntington, which was mainly concerned with the many sick and poor refugees. Four hundred saints with means committed property, food, and money to help the indigent. Non-Mormons in Quincy also contributed support through their "democratic committee" and welcomed the Mormons. Governor Carlin of Illinois and Governor Lucas of the Iowa Territory also extended invitations to settle.

The refugees from Far West took many routes to safety. This was partly due to the advice that Joseph Smith had offered from Liberty jail, that saints should *"fall into places of refuge or safety that God shall open unto them between Kirtland and Far West...in the most safe and quiet places they can find."* Many of them chose the shortest path out of the state of Missouri, driving straight north to Iowa and then east along the Iowa side of the border to the Mississippi River, creating the famed Mormon Trail, which Brigham Young used going the opposite direction in the winter of 1846 to escape Nauvoo. Some escaped on river boats from Richmond, Missouri down the Missouri River to St. Louis and then up the Mississippi. But the most common route was straight east across Missouri to the Mississippi ferry to Quincy, Illinois, where many remained awaiting further instructions as others fanned out to sympathetic towns in Illinois and Iowa. Elder Mace hosted many of the refugees in his house, including Joseph Young and John Taylor and his family. The apostle Taylor was also a wood turner and enjoyed the use of Mace's lathe, making enough wooden articles to support his family that winter.

When Brigham Young arrived in Quincy he proposed that "branches" be established to try to keep the fleeing Mormons together in communities.

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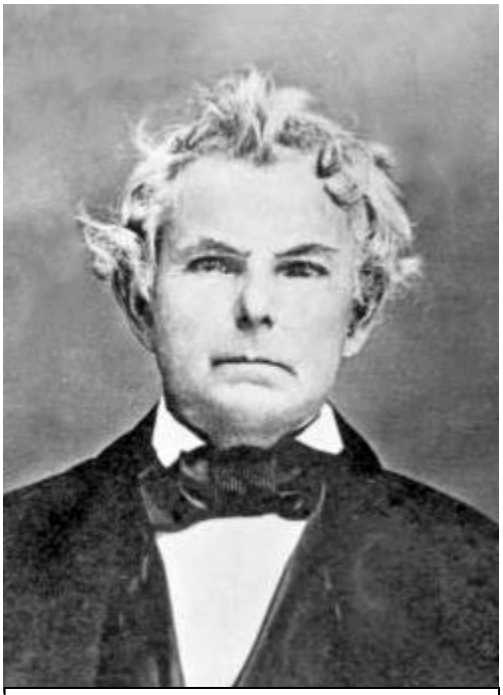
[32] Wandle Mace's autobiography includes the fascinating story of the night of November 8, 1833, when his company tested the street sweeper through the night to avoid street traffic. It happened to be the night of the spectacular Leonid meteor shower, which Mace described as resembling an illuminated snowstorm, but with loud reports as the meteors exploded. According to Wikipedia, the meteorites fell at an average of 7.4 per second over nine hours of darkness, an amazing 28 per second at the peak. The saints fleeing Missouri saw the shower as they were camped on the banks of the Missouri River and felt that it was a sign of the coming of Christ.

It was at Mace's house in Quincy that Dr. Isaac Galland,[33] a non-Mormon who lived in Commerce, offered to sell a large tract of land to the Mormons in February, 1839. He offered 20,000 acres at $2 per acre[34] for a vast area in Iowa between the Missouri and Des Moines Rivers.[35] Galland felt that the chance of persecution by mobs would be less in Iowa, which was still a Territory.



Dr. Isaac Galland ca. 1850

The question was not settled until April 22, when Joseph and Hyrum reached Quincy and were re-united with their families.[36] Joseph did not buy the half-breed tract, but instead bought Galland's farm in Commerce for $9,000 and another farm in that area from Hugh White for $5,000.[37] Joseph Smith presided at a general conference in Quincy where Brigham Young's settlement policy was affirmed. The Saints officially began moving to Commerce, which they re-named Nauvoo. On May 10th, Joseph Smith took up residence in a two-room log house which had belonged to Galland on the east bank of the Mississippi about a mile south of Commerce now called "the homestead." At that time Commerce had one stone house, three frame houses and two block houses. Otherwise the site was a wilderness of trees and bushes, the ground too sodden for a team to travel, barely walkable on foot. But once drained it was a good location for a city. Adjoining property was bought from Daniel H. Wells, David Hibbard, Hiram Kimball, and a Connecticut based real estate partnership of Horace Hotchkiss, John Gillett, and Smith Tuttle.[38]

Across the river in Lee County, Iowa the saints moved into Fort Des Moines, a deserted set of army barracks in Montrose, bought the tiny town of Nashville, and established the town of Zarahemla. At the 1839 October Conference, stakes were created in the city of

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[33] Isaac Galland 1791-1858 was a merchant, land speculator, and physician from Pennsylvania. He was a very early resident of what was to become Hancock County, Illinois in 1834. He established the village of Nashville on the west bank of the Mississippi, which he later sold to the Mormons. There he practiced medicine, established a trading post, and founded the first school in Iowa Territory. He moved to Warsaw in 1832, platted Keokuk, and then moved to Commerce in 1838. After selling to the Mormons he actually was baptized. He was ordained an Elder July 3, 1839, but had left the church by 1842.

[34] The price for lands purchased under the Homestead Act was $1.25 per acre.

[35] These included the so-called "half-breed lands," which had been set aside for descendants of French and Spanish trappers and their Native American wives, who were not eligible for reservations set aside for several local tribes. Wick, B. L. "The Struggle for the Half-Breed Tract." The Annals of Iowa 7 (1918), 16-29.

[36] The Wandle Mace autobiography is a genuine treasure, well worth checking out at http://www.boap.org/LDS/Early-Saints/WMace.html.

[37] Smith, Joseph Fielding, *Essentials in Church History*, 1950, p. 221.

[38] There will be more on the Connecticut group to follow.

Nauvoo and in Lee County, followed soon afterward in Quincy, Lima, Columbus, and Geneva. These, of course, were not what modern Mormons would think of as stakes—most were small congregations of around 100 or so. But after a year Nauvoo had a population of about 3,000.

In the meantime, Mephibosheth proselyted for about a year in Lenawee County, Michigan, where he "raised up" a branch of eleven members. One of the interesting stories told by LeRoy Sirrine about his uncle Mephibosheth probably occurred during that time. He wrote:

> *When he got away down in the back woods of Michigan he saw a nice looking house quite a way off. He went in and knocked at the door. And there was a quite an old lady came to the door, and he asked her if he could get something to eat and rest a while. She said yes for him to go around the house there was a fresh pail of water just drawn and he could wash himself and then sit in the rocking chair and when dinner was ready she would call him. They soon called him and seated him. And then two young women went in the bed room and brought out a very old man and seated him just opposite Mephabosia* (sic) *Sirrine, and every time the old gentleman would look up he seen Bosh looking at him. So he folded his arms and looked at Bosh and he wanted to know what he saw so very peculiar about him that he was always looking at him. Bosh told him that he never saw a man that looked as much like his father as he did. Then he wanted to know what his father's name was. And he told him his father's name was Isaac Sirrine. The old gent said My God he is my youngest Brother. He didn't need any help but he jumped up and went around and hugged and kissed him and cried for some time and had Bosh to stay with him for several days.*

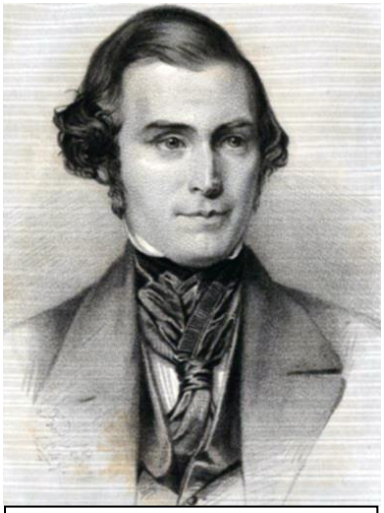
This was probably William Sirrine, Isaac's oldest brother, whose history is still lost to modern family genealogists.

Mephibosheth was just one of many missionaries harvesting souls in Michigan at the time. On September 18, 1839 Stephen Post reported to the Nauvoo Newspaper *Times and Seasons* on his own mission to Michigan. With other elders he preached in Wayne, Washtenaw, Lenawee, Oakland, and Lapeer Counties. They organized branches in Macon, Lenawee, Wayne (2), Livonia, Van Buren, and Lapeer of 60 members including five elders and four priests. Elder Post's principal companion was Elder A. Blanchard. He reported much harassment and vandalism against the Mormons.

Then in the fall of 1839[39] Mephibosheth moved his family to Washtenaw County, where they lived in Superior Township, near Ann Arbor. Theodore Sirrine was born October

[39] In his monumental four volume work on the Sirrine family, (Hibbert, Larry E., *The Sirrine Family Legacy*, Sugar City, ID, 2003, Vol. I. page 590) Larry Hibbert dated the beginning of Mephibosheth's mission as 5 August 1833 quoting from *Times and Seasons* Vol. I. p. 73, but this is a typographical error. The date was 5 August 1838.

27, 1839. Family genealogies differ on the exact place, although I'm pretty sure it was in Washtenaw County.



Orson Pratt

That year in November, Parley and Orson Pratt stopped at Detroit on their way to the British Isles to visit their parents and their brother Anson. Orson spent some time visiting Mephibosheth in Washtenaw County. On February 8, 1840 one of Mephibosheth's reports of his missionary activity was published in the *Times and Seasons*.[40] Of Elder Pratt's visit he wrote in that letter:

> *He called and tarried with me two weeks, and preached 14 sermons, which greatly excited the minds of the people, and they began to search their Bible to see if these things were so.*

It would be another month before Orson and Parley Pratt finally were able to get their missionary group together in New York City to depart for England. They were joined by Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball to sail on the old ship *Garrick*, which had carried out Elder Kimball and his group three years earlier.

Mephibosheth continued:

> *Since he left I have continued preaching, and the honest have still continued searching, while those whose crafts are in danger, still continue to oppose. "But, (say they) we could get along with it very well if it was not for Joe Smith, and that Book of Mormon," and while they saw the truth was spreading, and the honest were searching, they thought to stop the cause of Christ and break down the truth.*
>
> *A Baptist challenged me for a debate on the Book of Mormon. I accepted it....He then employed three to assist him--one Methodist and two Universal(ists). We met on the 16th of January at 11 o'clock A.M. with a large congregation to investigate the truth of this wonderful book. We then chose two moderators on each side, and they chose the fifth man to give the decision....*
>
> *The Judge then arose and said he would not give the decision...but should call upon the congregation to...vote as follows: Has the Book of Mormon been proven to be a divine revelation, from God, this day by the weight of argument?...All hands were raised through the whole assembly, both men and women. My opponents said they would not allow that vote, and that none should vote but the male adults, and that should be by their rising up....The question was again stated by the judge, and the male adults arose and they counted 35; they then took their seats, and the vote was called on the negative, and 3 arose on*

[40] *Times and Seasons,* Vol. I, p.73.

their side. And thus I can truly say, that the saying of Isaiah is fulfilling, where he says, "For the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid."

Thus you see the cause of truth is (moving) onward with Omnipotent strength in the State of Michigan. Since that debate I have had calls in every direction of the country, and also great calls for the Book of Mormon to read for themselves, and wish to know of me how long before you will have more of them for sale, and also your hymn books.

I preach from 5 to 6 times a week, and sometimes more, and then cannot fill all the calls. The harvest is truly great and the laborers but few.

Yours in the bond of the everlasting covenant. M. Sirrine.

The 1840 U.S. census showed that Mephibosheth and his little family were living in Superior, Washtenaw, Michigan. In his household were two males under the age of five, one female under five, and a female between 30 and 39. One of those boys, probably about three years old at the time of the census, must have died sometime between 1830 and 1840. His name is not known.[41] The younger boy was Theodore, an infant at the time. The girl was Helen, age five. Mephibosheth's wife Mariah was 30. A man named Henry Wheeler was living next door. Could he have been a relative of Mariah? Maybe a cousin—he was within ten years of her age and she had no brothers with that name.

Joseph Smith sanctioned a committee to organize stakes between Nauvoo and Kirtland in October, 1840. These were Mt. Ephraim, Lima, Quincy, Mounty Hope, Steam Mills, Payson, and Columbus, all in Adams County, also Geneva in Morgan County and Springfield in Sangamon County. All had their origins before he was released from Liberty Jail. The first impulse of the saints was to scatter, not gather in Nauvoo. Silas Smith, Joseph's uncle settled near Pittsfield, Don Carlos and Samuel Smith near Macomb, William in Plymouth and Emma and her in-laws in Quincy. All of these locations developed sizeable branches or stakes.

But in January, 1841, Joseph Smith issued the first official call to gather in Nauvoo proper. Prior to that time about half of the Mormons who had gathered lived in about 20 towns in Illinois and Iowa surrounding Hancock County. Now the emphasis would turn to constructing a temple and Nauvoo University. A second such call came in May. Both calls were based on an economic, not a spiritual argument.

The First Presidency of the Church, ...anxious to promote the prosperity of said church, feel it their duty to call upon those Saints who reside out of this county [Hancock], to make preparations to come in without delay....Should be attended to by all who feel an interest in the prosperity of this corner-stone of Zion. Here the Temple must be raised, the University built, and other edifices

[41] The gap in age between the children suggests that there may have been another child lost as well.

> *erected...which can only be done by a concentration of energy and enterprise. Let it therefore be understood, that all the stakes, excepting those in this county, and in Lee County, Iowa, are discontinued, and the Saints are instructed to settle in this country as soon as circumstances will permit.*[42]

A month later on February 1, 1841 Mephibosheth was presiding at a conference in Brownstone, Michigan 20 miles south of Detroit, which was attended by 140 members.[43] Elder Rufus Beach was there. He noted in his autobiography that most of the saints in that area were preparing to move west (to Nauvoo).

Mephibosheth moved to Hancock County with a small group of those Michigan members that summer. He appeared in the 1842 property tax records for Nauvoo,[44] so he had some sort of presence there around that time, possibly for as long as a year. I think that he and the members who came with him settled in the La Harpe Branch, which had been organized on April 17, 1841 just 11 days after the cornerstone was laid for the Nauvoo Temple. The town is located 25 miles east of Nauvoo in the northeast corner of Hancock County.

The first Mormons in La Harpe were Lewis Rice Chaffin and George Coulson, husband of Chaffin's wife's aunt. They had come from Pennsylvania to settle in the area between 1834 and 1836, where Chaffin had set up a grist mill. He was the town's first postmaster and later served as justice of the peace. George Coulson was a blacksmith. He had studied medicine in Pennsylvania under his wife's father and practiced part time in Hancock County. He was the first justice of the peace in La Harpe. The two men and their families became Mormons in 1840 after local missionaries found them, and Coulson soon became the La Harpe branch president, holding church meetings every four weeks at his house,[45] which also served as the schoolhouse. He also hosted missionaries and church leaders. Brigham Young and Willard Richards visited La Harpe November 17th and Joseph Smith and Emma made a trip to the new branch in their carriage July 6, 1842. Although Chaffin and Coulson were leading citizens of the new town, they fared no better than the other Mormons in the area when the persecutions flared in 1845, and were forced to flee to Nauvoo with their branch members. While there, Lewis Chaffin produced the iconic daguerreotype image of the completed Nauvoo Temple. George Coulson died at Council Bluffs during the exodus,

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[42] Reynolds, Philip R., "Spokes of the Wheel: Mormon Settlement Patterns in Illinois between 1838 and 1846," Stephen F. Austin State University, pp. 32, 33.

[43] By 1845 there were 25 branches in Michigan, of which 12 were in Oakland County, which contained the town of Pontiac, which had been established by Joseph Smith's uncle, Stephen Mack.

[44] Family History Library, microfilm 581,219.

[45] No regular meetinghouses or chapels existed at that time, and the branches did not meet weekly. The various regions of the Church met primarily in quarterly conferences. In Nauvoo, preaching was outdoor city-wide until 1845 when the temple was far enough along to house meetings. However in Nauvoo every Sunday (weather permitting) there was a sermon, Joseph Smith being the principal speaker, attended by members on both sides of the river. Allen, James B. and Leonard, Glen M., *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, Deseret Book, Salt lake City, Utah, 1976, p. 165

by then having served as a High Priest, Presiding Elder, and the bishop over the wives of the men serving in the Mormon Battalion. Lewis Chaffin had wealthy non-Mormon brothers in St. Louis, to whom he fled with his family when the Mormons were evicted from Nauvoo in 1846. His brothers did not join the Church, but gave Chaffin and his sons employment and sent them to Utah in 1852 driving a fine horse-drawn carriage. He served in 1856 as a missionary to Australia and eventually settled in Cedar City, Utah.

Rufus Beach and wife Laura Ann Gibbs ca. 1848

If I am correct in my theory that Mephibosheth moved in the summer of 1841 to La Harpe, the members that he brought were probably from the branch in Canton Township, also known as the Livonia Branch, in Wayne County. At their conference in Michigan on May 28, 1841 there were 23 members plus the missionaries Simeon A. Dunn, Rufus Beach, and M. Sovrine (Sirrine), clerk. In a list of members created between 1841 and 1842 in Hancock County (probably in La Harpe), Rufus Beach and Mephibosheth Sirrine were listed consecutively, apparently next-door neighbors. The code (CANTON) was listed after their names, which I believe probably designated them as coming from Canton, Michigan.[46] Mephibosheth and Beach were registered as "priesthood leader." Among the members not listed as leaders was Simeon A. Dunn, who was said to have walked on foot to Illinois on June 20, 1840, desiring to meet the Prophet personally. He went back to Michigan, got his family, and returned August 15, 1840 and stayed in Hancock County until the saints were driven out.

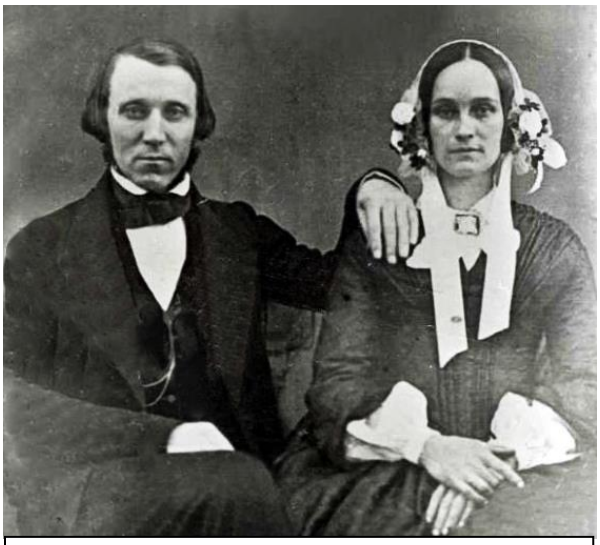
In his autobiography Rufus Beach wrote, *"in the fall of 1841 I removed to Illinois and lived in and near La Harpe."* Church records show that Rufus Beach received a patriarchal blessing from Hyrum Smith in Nauvoo on December 7, 1841. He wrote further, *"...I then removed to the city of Nauvoo in April 1842."* He is documented to have owned land in Nauvoo—Beach Tavern (Inn) and the Union Hotel in 1846. He was also a merchant and grocer. Nauvoo land record show that both Rufus Beach and Mephibosheth owned land inside the city as well as in La Harpe. I believe that they and all of the La Harpe Branch moved to the (temporary) protection in the city when mob tensions worsened in 1844-45.

[46] There were two towns in Illinois with the name Canton and New Canton.

On January 7, 1842 Mephibosheth was listed as a "Traveling Agent" of the Nauvoo newspaper, *Times and Seasons*, and a month later he received an Elder's license signed by James Sloan, clerk. These two items suggest that Mephibosheth's business in Michigan was not done. He was still needed there as a missionary and church leader. By around the beginning of the next year he was on the road again.

In a letter to Joseph Smith dated May 25, 1842, Elder Sirrine reported that he and Elder Crandell Dunn had arrived on Feb 15th at Brother Ira Rice's town of Superior, Washtenaw, Michigan after a journey of three weeks, preaching occasionally on the way. That he was traveling with a missionary companion suggests to me that he had left Mariah and the three children behind in Illinois, although at some later point they joined him. In the letter, Mephibosheth reported to the Prophet of holding meetings in Michigan of up to 400-500 people, of baptisms, and of debates.[47]

His companion, Crandell Dunn, had joined the Church in the fall of 1839 after hearing Orson Pratt preach with Mephibosheth on his way to England. Dunn attended Mephibosheth's debate with the ministers and had come home very impressed. Mephibosheth baptized him in Superior, Michigan on July 6, 1840 and ordained him a teacher the following December. Crandell Dunn wrote in his journal that he and his extended family later moved from Michigan to La Harpe, Illinois in June and July, 1841 where they bought a lot in Hancock County next to his brother, who had made the trip in the fall of 1840,[48] evidence that the Sirrine family had also gone to Nauvoo about that time.



Crandell Dunn and wife Mary Ann Cahoon

And now the two men were back in the mission field after a time in Nauvoo. It is hard to know where Mephibosheth's family was during these trips to Michigan and back. My guess is that after the first trip with Elder Crandell in January, 1841 he took his family with him whenever he could. I have two reasons to assume that (though without documentation, for I have been unable to find any.) First, times were getting ever more dangerous in Illinois for the Mormons. Second, Mariah had several families of close Wheeler relatives in Michigan, who could have given her support with her children.

While they were away, much was happening in Nauvoo. On February 15, 1842 the *Times and Seasons* announced that Joseph Smith and the Quorum of the Twelve had

[47] https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-from-mephibosheth-sirrine-25-may-1842/1.
[48] https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/memories/L4W6-S32.

bought out the newspaper. Joseph became the editor. John Taylor was chief editorial assistant and Wilford Woodruff supervised printing.

On March 17, 1842 the Women's Relief Society was organized in Nauvoo.

On May 5, 1842 an attempt was made on the life of Governor Lilburn Boggs at Independence, Jackson County. Although he was in Illinois at the time, Joseph Smith was accused of the murder and deputies were sent from Missouri to arrest him.

On June 25, 1842 John C. Fremont set out on his first expedition to the Rocky Mountains following the Platte River to the South Pass. He climbed 13,745 foot Fremont's Peak and planted an American flag, claiming the Rocky Mountains and the West for the United States. His *Report of the Exploring Expedition to the Rocky Mountains* was printed in 1843 in newspapers across the country. Mormon leaders were very interested in his experiences.

There is an information gap here on Elder Sirrine of several months. I think Mephibosheth was back in Hancock County with his family sometime after his May 5th letter and before fall. In 1842-3 there was a strong call for Mormons to move from the surrounding communities to live in Nauvoo. But the Sirrines stayed in La Harpe that summer.

It was in 1843 that Wandle Mace wrote of Joseph wrestling:

> *While waiting for the brethren to return, Joseph dismounted from his horse and engaged in a friendly wrestle with some of the "boys," as he called them. He often tried to get me to wrestle with him but I never could. I was a strong man as well as he was. Often when we met and shook hands he would pull me to him for a wrestle and say, slapping my shoulder with his hand, "If you are not a strong man, there is no use of putting a man upright."* [49] [50]

Could this possibly be the period when the healing reported by LeRoy Sirrine and Mephibosheth's wrestling with the prophet occurred?

Mephibosheth left La Harpe again in November, 1842 according to another update that he sent to Joseph Smith nine months later from Michigan. He also reported several noteworthy events that had occurred that winter. The first of these occurred on January 18, 1843, when Mephibosheth's debated Elder Knight, a preacher of the Christian Church. According to Mephibosheth's account published in the *Times and Seasons,* each debater got 30 minutes and Mephibosheth went first, setting out the doctrine of the kingdom of God according to Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4. Knight replied that the gifts were for the original church only and were meant to cease. Elder Sirrine countered that the gifts were for the perfecting of the saints and to protect them from every wind of

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[49] Alexander L. Baugh, "Joseph Smith's Athletic Nature," in *Joseph Smith: The Prophet, The Man*, ed. Susan Easton Black and Charles D. Tate Jr., Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1993, 137–150.

[50] Footnote to Mace autobiography: http://www.boap.org/LDS/Early-Saints/WMace.html.

doctrine. They went back and forth for about three hours *"and the truth came out triumphant"* and the moderator agreed. Mephibosheth continued, *"The debate made a very favorable impression on the minds of many. The next week I baptized ten, most of whom were members of the different churches; and thus instead of stopping the cause (of Truth), they added to its number."*

On January 20, 1843 Mephibosheth was chair of the Lapeer County Stake conference while also representing the Brownstone Branch. He gave the opening prayer for the conference, which seems to have been the customary duty of the presiding priesthood authority. This he followed with an explanation of True Charity. He made some remarks on his early labors in Michigan, followed by remarks from the members in general. The conference appeared to have been similar to modern Mormon testimony meetings. In attendance were 112 members from seven branches and 50 more, who were unaffiliated. Twelve Elders (missionaries) were present. Three sessions were held over two days, with Elder Sirrine giving a talk in each session along with other speakers. During one of the intermissions, a *"little champion of the M. Episcopal order"* gave a discourse, which declared the falsity of Mahomet's system of religion, Roman Catholicism, and of the Mormons. After the interloper left, President Sirrine asked the members to

> *"...stop a few minutes, which they did, and heard the mistakes corrected with apparent satisfaction. The president then proceeded moderately to knock off some of the scales, as he expressed it, of the Methodist discipline, and adjourned for half an hour."*[51]

Another debate for Mephibosheth was held on Independence Day, this time with a Campbellite in Lapeer, and then July 22nd in Franklin with a Universalian named Curtis. Elder Sirrine reported:

> "*... and the result has been the same in each of them. The decision went against them. I have baptized since last January between fifty and sixty, and have organized two more branches, one in Livingston County, town of Briton, consisting of twenty members, known by the name of Pleasant Valley Branch; and another branch in the vicinity of Franklin, Oakland County; called the Franklin Branch, consisting of sixteen members. Thus the cause of God is onward in this state, and all the powers of wicked men and hireling priests combined, cannot stop the cause of Israel's God, for it is onward and will continue to roll until the 'kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.'*

At conference on July 28, 1843 in Briton, Michigan, Mephibosheth Sirrine was again chosen to preside. Nine branches were represented.[52] President Sirrine gave the opening prayer, and then made appropriate remarks on the object of the meeting. In

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[51] *Times and Seasons* Vol. 4, p.111-112.

[52] *Times and Seasons* 4:299-300 and Joseph Smith Papers.

addition to Briton he represented the branches from Franklin, Oakland County and Royal Oak. There were seven additional branches in attendance. Crandle Dunn was clerk and represented the Livonia Branch from the Canton area. Strong testimony was borne, and declarations of healings. Conference adjourned until October to be resumed in Franklin, ten miles south of Pontiac.

I have no information on Mephibosheth and Mariah for the rest of that year. I assume that they had returned to Hancock County.

That summer during political campaigns, both Whigs and Democrats wooed the Mormons. Two Mormons who had been elected to county offices were threatened by armed men at Carthage when they went to take their oath of office and to present bonds. They were accepted by the government, but anti-Mormons began to organize around the issue of Mormons holding political office. One issue was the many foreign-born Mormons wishing to participate in politics.

It appears to me that the Sirrines were spending each summer in La Harpe, and then returning in winter to Michigan. On January 12, 1844 the *Times and Seasons* reported that Mephibosheth had again presided at the conference in Brownstown, Main County Michigan. G. Savage was appointed clerk. Elder Sirrine also represented the 17 members of Franklin, the Serrine (sic) Branch with 14 members, and the Willsdale Branch. Mephibosheth spoke once, but Savage gave several talks. During the intermission "*Elder Serrine baptized one individual. Met according to appointment, opened by singing and prayer. The president then administered the sacrament, and confirmed the person who had been baptized; blessed four children. Adjourned till evening.* They met again the next day, when Elder Sirrine preached from I Corinthians 15.

On January 29, 1844 Joseph Smith was nominated for President of the United States.

Elder Savage wrote to the *Times and Seasons* from St. Joseph, clear across the state on Lake Michigan reporting *"...every prospect of an abundant Harvest....asking for experienced missionaries to be sent."* And the church responded. At general conference in Nauvoo a huge number of missionaries were called to 25 states. Charles C. Rich (who was assigned to be president), Zebedee Coltrin, Joseph Curtis, and eleven others were sent to Michigan. By May 24th, President Rich was on his way to Michigan. That June, Mephibosheth was ordained a High Priest and the *"presiding high priest over all the branches of the Church in* (Eastern) *Michigan."*

On May 17, 1844 a state convention at Nauvoo sustained the nomination of the Prophet for President.

A week later Samuel Morse sent the world's first telegram from Washington D.C. to Baltimore, Maryland with this message: *"What hath God Wrought?"*

On June 27th Joseph and Hyrum Smith were murdered in the jail at Carthage, Illinois.

The Twelve Apostles were immediately recalled from their missions. But evidently missionaries such as Mephibosheth did not immediately return to Nauvoo after the prophets' death. Certainly Mariah Wheeler Sirrine did not, for on August 7, 1844 she was in Pontiac, Michigan delivering her fourth child, whom they named Parley Pratt Sirrine.

On the next day in Nauvoo, Brigham Young was widely observed to have been transfigured, taking on the appearance of Joseph Smith. Although many went in other directions, the majority of Latter-day Saints accepted him as the legitimate successor to Joseph Smith.

M. Sirrine presided over a conference of 14 branches in Brownsville on August 9th which lasted three days. But he was absent from the first session, which was conducted by Elder William Burton in his stead. I assume Mephibosheth was missing because of the birth of his child, and possibly because Mariah was already showing signs of post-partum difficulties. Mephibosheth was present for the next two sessions representing the Superior, Cedar, Waterford, and Hillsdale branches, but Elder G. Savage took care of the singing and the prayer.

Three weeks later came this sad announcement: *August 27, 1844 Elder Burton preached the funeral sermon of Sister Serrine.*[53]

I have no other record of the event, nor any indication of its effect on Mephibosheth, but it must have been brutal. It appears that his 34 year old wife had died unexpectedly from an obstetrical cause, whether hemorrhage, infection, or pulmonary embolism. I imagine that their young daughter Helen was obliged to step in much too early as substitute mother for the newborn and five-year-old Theodore. She was 11. Perhaps Mariah's Wheeler family was able to fill part of the gap.

Mariah's mother died sometime before 1840, possibly even before she and Mephibosheth arrived in Michigan in August of 1838. Mariah's father, James Wheeler, had died July 27, 1842, possibly with Mariah at his bedside. She had two sisters living in Michigan at the time of her own death. Emeline, the youngest at age 28, was living in Hillsdale County about 100 miles from Pontiac. Her 39 year old sister Sally lived in West Bloomfield, only seven miles away from the Sirrines. It is reasonable to think that Sally had attended the birth of little Parley and cared for Mariah in her last days. Sally and her husband William Beatty had two teenage girls. Mariah's three brothers—James S., Samuel, and Abraham—all lived within 30 miles, and all of them had children at home.

Mephibosheth was probably in attendance at General Conference in Nauvoo on October 7th, when Brigham Young called him as well as 86 additional High Priests to go abroad in all the congressional districts of the United States to preside over the

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[53] Browne, Hilda Faulkner, *The Michigan Mormons*, 1985.

branches of the Church. Brigham said that the object was not to tarry six months and then return, but to settle down where they can take their families and tarry until the temple was built, and then come and get their endowment. In addition to Mephibosheth Sirrine, this list included such luminaries as Abraham O. Smoot, Elijah Fordham, Franklin D. Richards, Wandle Mace, Charles Crismon, Ezra Taft Benson, and Lorenzo Snow.

Despite President Young's instruction to settle down, it appears that many the High Priests returned much earlier that six months, and some didn't go at all. I didn't research all of them, but checked out the "luminaries."

The obedient Abraham O. Smoot was sent to Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi. He returned in the summer of 1845 with a large number of Saints, who helped to finish the temple. Franklin D. Richards left on January 12, 1845 for Michigan and returned April 2nd with wagons, cattle, and sheep to aid in the building of the temple. Ezra T. Benson left December 1844 for Boston, where he presided over the members. He returned in May, 1845, having just reached six months. Lorenzo Snow apparently did not go, but he was reported to have worked much on the temple in 1845. Wandle Mace apparently did not go either. His wife had a baby on November 6, 1844 soon after conference. To be fair, Mace's inventive skills were probably too important to divert from the temple project. Charles Crismon had a new four month old baby when called. He moved from Ramus to Nauvoo, securing a house in the winter of 1845, apparently not having gone abroad at all. That is a small sample, but only one of them stayed longer than six months.

By January, 1845 Mephibosheth was again presiding over a conference, but this time it was not in Michigan. It was at Hartford, Connecticut.

I have no factual information on the next 12 weeks. Here's what I imagine happened next.

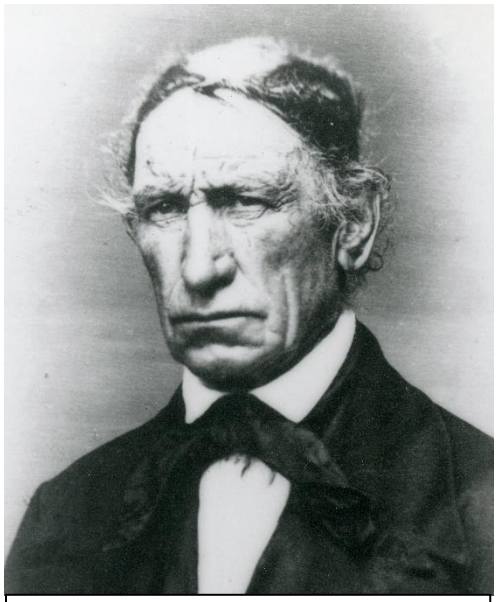
Not knowing that he would be called on a new mission, Mephibosheth very likely travelled without his three children to the General Conference in Nauvoo after Mariah's funeral. After receiving his instructions from Brigham Young, he probably headed right back to Pontiac, where I assume the children were under the care of Mephibosheth's sister-in-law Sally. It is possible that he left them with her, but I think it is more likely he took them with him, with 11 year old Helen taking care of the infant Parley.[54] The trip would have been relatively easy. He could take a steamer from Detroit to Buffalo, travel

[54] My proofreading wife Linda raised this important issue: Could people bottle-feed babies in that day? The answer is apparently "yes." During the mid-19th century, great strides were made in the development of the feeding bottle and the nipple....In 1810, Nicholas Appert developed a technique to sterilize food in sealed containers. His development was followed by the invention of evaporated milk, which was patented in 1835 by William Newton. In 1853, Texan Gale Borden added sugar to the evaporated milk, canned the substance, and sold it as Eagle Brand Condensed Milk, which became a popular infant food.
https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2684040/#

the Erie Canal to Albany, and ride a Hudson River steamer to his childhood home in Putnam County, scarcely touching land.

It would have been a great reunion with the Sirrine family. As far as I know, they had not seen each other since Mephibosheth and Elder Wandle Mace preached the gospel to them in the summer of 1838 before his mission to Michigan. And surely he now preached to them again—he could not have helped himself. The Church History Library in Salt Lake City has an unsigned, undated poem written by one of the Sirrine children, urging Isaac and Sarah Sirrine to obey the gospel and gather with the Saints in Nauvoo.[55] Surely that was written by Mephibosheth.

He had three married siblings in Philipstown at that time. John and Nancy had lost their first three children, but were expecting in the spring. Seth and Joanna were expecting their first about the same time. Mephibosheth's 22 year old sister, Hannah Mead, would bear her first child in January. So, it appears to me that Helen, Theodore, and Parley had no competition for Isaac and Sarah's attention with no other grandchildren around. Mephibosheth's two youngest brothers, George and Samuel, were single and probably living at home. Both of them eventually joined the Mormon Church—no one knows exactly when. Perhaps this is when they were converted.



Isaac Sirrine

Mephibosheth would have traveled the rest of the way to his mission by land. He would take the 70 mile trade road directly east from Philipstown to the port of New Haven Connecticut, the same one which his grandfather's generation had used. My guess is that he left his children behind for a time with the Sirrine family.

The state of Connecticut had a significant role in early Mormon Church history. Wilford Woodruff's father Aphek lived in Farmington, Connecticut, which was the site of several of that prolific missionary's first baptisms, mostly extended family members. Orson Hyde was born in Oxford, Connecticut, and raised in Derby, six miles from New Haven. In 1845 many Connecticut church members were pulling up stakes and moving to Illinois, but there were still several thriving branches there. One missionary named Elisha Hildebrand Davis, Sr., who had left New Haven the previous spring, wrote that he had "*built several churches*" in the year he had served there. He would later serve with Mephibosheth in England.

[55] At the time of this writing, the Library is closed due to Covid-19 concerns. You can find the poem as item # MS6893, but it would require a personal visit to view.

But I don't think that proselyting was Brigham Young's main concern when he dispatched those 87 High Priests. He was sending administrative leaders with instructions to gather the scattered members to Zion and to gather resources for finishing the Nauvoo Temple.

The Joseph Smith papers[56] contain an impressive collection of correspondence between the Church leaders in Nauvoo and a partnership of three wealthy merchants and real estate developers from Connecticut, who along with Dr. Isaac Galland were the principal financiers of the properties in Hancock and Lee Counties. These were Horace Hotchkiss, Smith Tuttle, and John Dean Gillett. For example, Hotchkiss had written to Joseph Smith in March, 1840 about the Mormons' petition before Congress for redress, inviting him and Sydney Rigdon to stay at his house when they came to Washington. He also wrote Brigham Young with condolences and advice after the martyrdom of the Smith brothers on July 10, 1844. He felt that the restraint with which Mormons had dealt with the tragedy would win them many friends in the East.[57] Although not a Mormon, Hotchkiss was listed as a Connecticut agent for the Nauvoo newspaper *Times and Seasons*.

It seems fair to speculate that one of Mephibosheth's assignments may have been to cultivate these financiers for support of the temple project or for debt relief. I have no specific information on such interactions or even on his church activities during his mission there, but one important act is well documented. On April 9, 1845 he married 22 year old Rachel Gillett. He was identified on the record as *Rev.* Mephibosheth Sirrine, not a typical Mormon title. (It makes me wonder whether this was a Protestant marriage.)

I have tried to find a Mormon connection for Rachel, but so far without success.[58] Interestingly, John Sirrine's wife, Nancy Smith, was born in Fair Haven, Connecticut and could have introduced Mephibosheth to Rachel, but Nancy was not a Mormon either. And none of Rachel's family has been identified as Mormons. I don't know for sure whether she ever joined the Church at all. What I did discover seems even more remarkable: she was the step-daughter of Smith Tuttle, one of the men who sold Commerce and Hancock County land to Joseph Smith. Here's her story.

Rachel never knew her birth father, Eliphaz Gillett, who was born in 1788 in Wolcott, Connecticut. He was a wealthy merchant, who owned three ships and a large warehouse in Fair Haven, Connecticut. While on a voyage as captain of his own brig *John* he died at the age of 32 in St. Augustine, Florida on November 1, 1822, probably

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[56] https://www.josephsmithpapers.org, search term: Fair Haven.

[57] One other non-Mormon from Fair Haven, Connecticut to correspond with Brigham Young was the famous American inventor Eli Whitney. On January 6, 1846, having heard of the impending Mormon exodus from Nauvoo, Whitney wrote to offer the sale of his rifles and muskets, which he felt might help the Mormons on their trek to California. Church History Library: search Eli Whitney, Brigham Young Correspondence.

[58] Unfortunately, Covid-19 closure has prevented me from looking at the early church meeting minutes at the Church History Library.

of yellow fever. His brother Asahel, also an officer on the ship, died two days later. The ship was returned to New Haven by the second mate and a Spanish crew. At that time Eliphaz's wife Amarilla was five months pregnant with Rachel. Amarilla married Smith Tuttle around 1824, so he was the only father Rachel would have remembered. Smith Tuttle had previously been married to Eliphaz's sister (confusingly also named Rachel Gillett). He was also a merchant and stepped right into Eliphaz's lucrative shipping operation.

At the time of her marriage to Mephibosheth, Rachel had two living Gillett siblings--a 31 year old married sister named Adeline and a brother named John Dean Gillett. John had left home at the age of 17 and moved to Illinois in 1838, where he lived with their deceased father's younger brother, who was also named John Dean Gillett. This Uncle John was the partner to Hotchkiss and their stepfather, Smith Tuttle in the deal with Joseph Smith for Commerce. While Hotchkiss and Tuttle ran the operation in Connecticut, Uncle John Dean Gillett was the man on the ground, scouting out, evaluating, and selling the properties. He had moved to Commerce in 1837, two years before the Mormons. After the sale, he moved to Logan County Illinois, where he became wealthy farming with his namesake nephew, who in his middle years became a cattle baron.[59]

At the time of her marriage, Rachel had three younger step-siblings at home. Emma, the youngest, was ten, about the same age as Mephibosheth's daughter Helen. It must have been a challenge for Rachel to become an instant mother to Mephibosheth's three children, one of whom was only nine months old. It seems probable to me that Rachel and Mephibosheth left the children in Putnam County with his family until it was time for them all to return to Nauvoo.

Desiring to have a better idea of Mephibosheth's church experience in Connecticut, I studied a few of the Mormons whom I could identify living in New Haven or Fair Haven at that time. One was Isaac Richards Goodwin, who was about Mephibosheth's age, having been born in 1810. As a 19-year-old, Isaac had worked for a man named David Hotchkiss (whom I could not connect to Horace) and married his daughter Laura. The two of them were baptized by Laura's missionary cousin a few months before Elder Sirrine arrived. The following year the Goodwin family booked passage on Sam

[59] Whole books have been written about Rachel's brother John Dean Gillett, who died one of the richest men in Illinois. He was actually a friend of Abraham Lincoln before the log splitter became President. John Dean Gillett was president of the Bank of Illinois in August, 1853, when he and his associates created the town of Lincoln, Illinois in Lincoln's honor when he was still a Whig before the great man was elected to the Illinois Legislature as a Republican. It was a railroad town, which had been platted by Lincoln in his job as attorney for the Illinois Central Railroad. When told by Gillett and his partners what the name of the town was to be, Lincoln is said to have objected, saying that in his experience, "Nothing bearing the name of Lincoln ever amounted to much." From Find-a-Grave: "John D. Gillette, the cattle king of Illinois, father-in-law of Governor Oglesby, died here this morning. At the time of his death he owned 20,000 acres of land in Logan County, Illinois and had $100,000 of stock of five Central Illinois banks. His fortune is estimated at $650,000. He was one of the first to export beef cattle to England."

Brannon's chartered ship *Brooklyn*, and sailed with Mephibosheth's brothers John and George to California. Tragically, Laura died after falling down a hatch during a storm, leaving Isaac a widower with seven children. He eventually married another woman from New Haven and moved to Lehi, Utah.

William Oscar Sperry and his widowed mother, Elizabeth joined the church in 1842 when he was eleven years old. Though crippled, he began working at that age to help support them. They went west together in 1848.

Newton Tuttle had quit school at the age of 17 to become a blacksmith in 1842. He first heard of the Mormons meeting in New Haven and other towns nearby in 1844 and was baptized by the missionary Elisha Davis. He may have been a distant relative of Smith Tuttle, but I couldn't connect them.

That winter the Mexican War was brewing. Mexico severed relations with the U. S. in March, 1845 over the annexation of Texas.

By June or earlier Mephibosheth was back in Nauvoo. John Taylor's journal entry for June 8, 1845 reads: *In the morning at meeting at the stand, Bro. O. Pratt and Bro Serrine,* (sic) *from Michigan where he has been presiding, preached.* The previous day two children had been found buried in the sand south of the temple; Mephibosheth Sirrine's discourse at the stand was a funeral sermon for the two.[60]

Nauvoo was becoming ever more dangerous, yet Mormons continued to gather there. Members who had remained in Michigan were advised in September sell their holdings in readiness to unite with the Mormons in Nauvoo, so if the Sirrines were still in Connecticut, they were probably not planning to return to Mephibosheth's home in Washtenaw County. Whenever it was, I suspect that Rachel, Mephibosheth, and the three children returned via Putnam County to visit their Sirrine relatives. They may have taken the water route back through Michigan, but it would make equal sense to assume they came overland with a group of New Englanders headed to Nauvoo.

On September 22, 1845 the Saints' former allies in Quincy held a mass meeting which led to a resolution that the Mormons would be better off to leave the State of Illinois. Brigham Young replied that the Saints already planned to leave the next spring. Three weeks later, Mephibosheth was appointed Captain of the 24th Company of Hundreds for the migration west. His task was to put together a company of his Michigan saints. One of them was Norton Jacob, who wrote:

> *On the morning of the 20th I put my name in Brother M. Serrine's company to go west. He was just starting for Michigan to gather up the brethren and appointed me one of a committee of three to attend to the business of the company in his*

[60] Willard Richards Diary, June 1845.

> *absence. In the evening I met with the company it was agreed that I should go the next day in search of timber for wagons.*[61]

Mephibosheth's name appeared again in the Council of 50 minutes of January 19, 1846. He was to bring 23 people from Michigan with 22 horses and 12 wagons.

On February 1, 1846 a reprint of New York City newspaper article by Sam Brannan appeared in the *Millennial Star* in Nauvoo advertising the departure of the *Brooklyn.* The ship was to sail January 24th (the word came a little too late for Nauvoo people to sign up). John J. Sirrine and family,[62] George W. Sirrine, and S. Brannan families were listed as registrants. The ship actually sailed on February 4th, the very day that the first party of pioneers from Nauvoo crossed the frozen Mississippi into Iowa Territory.

Mephibosheth was mentioned again by the *Millennial Star* on February 13, reporting his successful trip to Michigan. The trip was also recorded in Norton Jacob's journal.

> *Friday, February 13th. Brother M. Serrine arrived from Michigan having had good success in his mission. About seventy families are on their way to this place fully fitted and prepared to go on West as soon as they arrive. Saturday morning I went with Brother Serrine to visit Brother Brigham Young and get council from him concerning our future operations. He was stopping at his brother Joseph Young's, having sent his baggage wagons across the river the night before. He appeared to be in good spirits and was well pleased with what Brother Serrine had done and told him to organize his company and keep them together and start as soon as possible across the country to Council Bluffs with their teams. A steamboat should be chartered to carry the mill, irons, goods, and heavy baggage around by water to the same place.*[63]

On March first, Mephibosheth crossed the frozen Mississippi River with four others to go to the camp at Sugar Creek. The saints were striking their tents to move out. Jacob wrote further:

> *I went in company with Brethren Serrine, O(tis) Terry, Jackson Bagley and Frost over to the camp. The weather having been cold had frozen the river over the second time this winter, so we crossed on the ice and went out six miles to the camp. We found the camp of Israel in motion, striking their tents to move on a Sabbath day's journey farther. We found them in good spirits having President Brigham Young and the Twelve in their midst.*

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[61] Norton Jacob Autobiography https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/memories/KNQK-QS3

[62] John Sirrine was not a Mormon. From Laura Rudy: *Back to NYC as carpenter until 1848 (actually 1846) when he sailed on Brooklyn for health, taking $2,000. He had known Captain Richardson. There he built the first frame house on the Pacific coast, rallying place for New Yorkers. Served as school board trustee, supervisor of first hotel, the Parker House, went to gold fields. Bought lots, built and sold, making a handsome profit. Logged redwoods, built first warehouse, returned directly to Trumansburg in 1850, healthy and wealthy. Bought a house, eight acres and a warehouse for $8,000 in gold.*

[63] Norton Jacob Autobiography https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/memories/KNQK-QS3.

Here are my observations about this. First, the men who crossed the river that day were all from Michigan. They were probably part of the group that Mephibosheth was to take to Council Bluffs. They were not with the vanguard group, which left that very day, but were instructed by Brigham to start as soon as possible. It appears to me that Mephibosheth was planning to go with them.

Among them were the Terry family. Mephibosheth had baptized Otis Terry, his wife Cynthia, and his two married sons with their wives in Oakland County Michigan on May 23, 1843. According to the Terry family biographer Nettie C. Warenski,[64] Brigham Young appointed Otis to be the bishop of Sugar Creek, where he assisted to coordinate the launching of wagon trains to Winter Quarters. His two oldest sons, Otis Lysander and Charles Algernon Terry, went on to Winter Quarters. Their third son, Henry Algernon, had not joined the Church. He came with the family to Nauvoo in 1844, but during the exodus he struck out on his own. The entire Terry family was probably camped at Sugar Creek on that day. The rest of Mephibosheth's Michigan party could have been there as well, preparing to move as soon as they could. I think that they probably left a short time later. But Brigham Young apparently said something to Mephibosheth before pulling up stakes on March 1st, which changed everything for him.

He did not leave with his Michigan group, but the Terry family took Mephibosheth's two boys, Parley and Theodore, with them.

A month after the departure of the vanguard pioneer company, Mephibosheth was still busy in Nauvoo. When General Conference was held as usual on April 8th, Mephibosheth offered the opening prayer at the first session. He was also one of the three speakers at the final session on April 12th along with Orson Hyde and James A. Stratton. After all his preparations to lead a pioneer company west, I wonder what Mephibosheth felt when his name was read as part of a group of missionaries called to England. I can hardly believe it myself as I write. In my view, he had already done his time, having pretty much been on a mission for the preceding seven years.

Ten days later, the Nauvoo Temple was dedicated in private services on April 30, 1846, and in public services on May 1. Of course, Mephibosheth was there. By this time the first group of Saints had been on the trail for nearly three months, having reached Garden Grove, Iowa.

In the meantime, war was breaking out with Mexico. On May 11, 1846 President James Polk gave his war message to Congress, claiming that American blood had been shed on American soil, the Mexicans having crossed the disputed Rio Grande. This led to the recruitment of the Mormon Battalion from among the trekking saints in July.

A big part of Mephibosheth's preparation for the British Mission must have been figuring out what to do with the rest of his family. To begin with, Rachel was pregnant. I have no details except that she bore a baby girl whom they named Maria in the year 1847,

[64] https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/memories/LLM9-Y7V.

which means the baby was conceived before Mephibosheth departed that fall and born before he returned. The baby only lived a brief time, so it seems probable the she never saw her father. A monumental decision of faith had been made to send the two boys into the wilderness with Charles Alphonzo Terry and his wife Philinda. Theodore was seven and Parley was only 17 months old when they left in February. The Terrys had their own boy who was just one week younger than Parley. That must have been an excruciating decision for both families. Eleven year old Helen would go with Rachel to Fair Haven, Connecticut. Rachel's half-sister Emma was just the same age, and they had sisters who were 16 and 18.

I do not know exactly when the boys and the Michigan saints left, but if not immediately, it must have sometime that spring, for according to his biography, Charles Terry arrived in Winter Quarters that year, and we know that they made lengthy stops at Garden Grove and Mount Pisgah. As Mephibosheth was returning from his mission, he wrote that he had heard no news about the boys since August of 1846. I imagine that Mephibosheth, Rachel, and Helen must have left for Connecticut at the latest in July, based on when the missionaries arrived in England. When they passed through Putnam County to visit Isaac and Hannah Sirrine they probably got the first news of the death of Seth Sirrine, Mephibosheth's younger brother. He had died March 21st.

According to a letter from the British Mission to Brigham Young,

> *Br. M. Sirrine and C. Dunn* (Mephibosheth's mission companion from Michigan) *and his wife arrived in Liverpool on September 7, 1846....Bro. Sirrine has been appointed to preside over the Manchester Conference instead of Br. David Candlin Kimball....Bro. Sirrine also would like to know about his children.*

The letter was penned on Sept 18th and sent by steam packet leaving the next day. It was signed by Crandell Dunn, M. Sirrine, Lucius N. Scovil, and Joseph Cain.

We would not have this letter at all if it had not eventually been received by Brigham Young and archived in his historic collection of documents. But it must have been received much later that fall or winter in Winter Quarters, Nebraska Territory. Elder Sirrine did not hear back about his children.

That month at a council meeting of the Manchester Branch the brethren proposed that *"Elder M. Sirrine send for his wife from America... (and) receive his money personally collected in the branches for his support."* He may have gotten the money, but not his wife.

By October, Mephibosheth was doing the work that had become familiar to him in Michigan. He was conducting conference in Manchester. The Apostle Orson Hyde, who had arrived in England just a few days after Elder Sirrine, presided and gave the opening address. He reported that they had suffered a hurricane on the way, which carried away *"all our canvas and partly dismasted our noble ship."*

On Christmas Eve, the *Millennial Star* published a page-long account of a dream, which Mephibosheth had recorded, of an encounter with the resurrected Apostle James. He was featured again in May, 1847 when the *Star* reported that Elder M. Sirrine gave a lecture before the assembly of the saints at the Hall of Science, Manchester on February 7th. The talk, which was on hearing the word and receiving the spirit of promise, was printed in its entirety.

The Manchester Branch decided to fast on Sunday, June 13, the proceeds to be appropriated to assist Elder Mephibosheth N. Sirrine in going back to his wife and family and to take them through the wilderness to the Camp.

Elder Sirrine sailed to New York City from Liverpool on the ship *Empire* with Elders L.N. Scovil, H. B. Jacobs, and O. B. Huntington. On August 12, 1847 Mephibosheth and Elder Scovil wrote to President Orson Spencer and F. D. Richards in England from 338 Hudson Street, New York.[65] They had a good passage...five weeks at sea, arriving August 9 at the quarantine ground. They experienced three very heavy storms and made but slow progress on account of taking tack so frequently. They also experienced a fire in an adjoining apartment, which created great excitement among the passengers. There were "only" three deaths. They were called upon by the captain to preach, and they did so. The letter reported on the great battle in Mexico,[66] won by General Scott and the arrival of Sam Brannan at Fort Hall, Idaho. It ended, *"Brother Sirrine has gone to Newhaven today and left me to finish the letter."*[67]

The *Millennial Star* published a poem written by Mrs. R. T. Sirrine, to her absent husband.[68] This would have been two months after his departure. One line went: ...*I think of thee, when round me clings my little girl so dear; and when I look at her, thy form I see...* This is how I know for sure that Helen was with Rachel. By the time the poem was published they were together again.

Surely they must have visited the Sirrines in Putnam County, New York, but by then Mephibosheth's brothers John and George were in San Francisco. They had been there for well over a year. Seth, of course, had died the year before. The youngest brother, Samuel, was in Mexico City with the Second New York Regiment, having participated in the worst of the fighting. Mephibosheth's oldest brother Abraham was still living in Hector. The only Sirrines left at home were Isaac, Sarah, and their daughter Hannah Mead with her husband and two year old daughter. As far as I can tell, between his arrival in August and the end of October, Mephibosheth was free to be with Rachel and Helen, travelling back and forth the 70 miles that separated their two families in Connecticut and New York.

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[65] *Millennial Star,* September 15, No. 18.

[66] Mephibosheth could have had no idea that his younger brother Samuel had fought with distinction in that very battle.

[67] Note. The ship *Empire* upon which they had traveled was wrecked on a coral reef while on its way to Vera Cruz, carrying soldiers for the Mexican War.

[68] No. 17 September 1, 1847.

But Mephibosheth's mission was not over.

William I. Appleby

On October 28, 1847 M. Sirrine was appointed President pro tem of the branches in the Eastern States, succeeding William I. Appleby, who went west to join the camps of saints on the frontier.

I was dismayed to learn this, but in a way I can see a bright side. I ached for him to be able to go home, but he really had none. Putnam County was no longer home, especially with all his brothers gone. He had no home in Michigan, nor in Hancock County. The Eastern States Mission was based in New York, which was as much a home as he had ever had. What he needed was his two boys, who were somewhere in the wilderness.

But he wasn't in New York very much. That winter Mephibosheth traveled extensively as priesthood leader of the Eastern States. He published a circular to the members. The New York saints had just "cleaned house" after excommunicating a leader who was sympathetic to the Strangites, a competing Mormon splinter group based in Wisconsin and Michigan. He wrote to encourage the members to be loyal and not to listen to imposters (non-credentialed Elders). He told them of not hundreds, but thousands of British Converts, who were coming and urged all members in the East to get ready to move to Council Bluffs in the spring, and "if the Lord will, in time for the mountains." He wrote from 281 Adams St., Brooklyn.

Orson Hyde, 1852

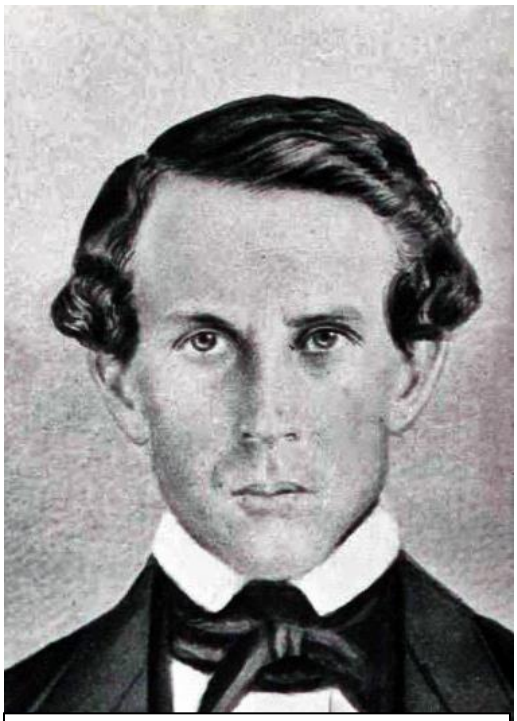
Five weeks into his new mission Mephibosheth wrote to Orson Hyde.

> *...my health is not very good at present but I am better than I have been. My family is all well, those that are with me. My two boys (are) somewhere with the Saints in the wilderness, but where I don't know. When I left for England I sent them on with Alphonzo Terry. I have not heard from them since a year ago last August. If you know of such a man in the camp or can find any of them please let me know. My health has been very poor for the last five months. About one month before I left England I took to a violent cold which threw me into a severe cough which has continued with me ever since. A part of*

the time since I have been home I have been confined to my room but at the present time I am much better than I have been. I desire your prayers that I may be restored to perfect soundness again. I should like to have been with you in the camp this winter if I could but my circumstances has been such that I could not get off in time with my family to get through before the River closed so I concluded to stay till Spring as Bro. Appleby was going to the camp this fall and wished me to take his place till next spring. I also felt as if the Saints need someone amongst them this winter. Therefore I thought on the whole it would be for the best to stay and do the best that I can for the up-building of the cause of Zion.

As soon as the ice broke up on the great rivers, Mephibosheth was ready to find his boys. But his health failed him. On April 29, 1848 the great missionary Mephibosheth Sirrine died of consumption on the Ohio River travelling to Winter Quarters. He left his widow with three step children, one in hand and two to find.

Rachel accompanied Mephibosheth's body to Winter Quarters where it was buried with several of the Apostles in attendance, including Brigham Young.[69] This is the letter, which Mephibosheth's grieving poetess wife Rachel Gillett wrote to his mother and sister.



Elder Mephibosheth N. Sirrine

July 4, 1848 Honey Creek, Iowa

Dear Mother and Dear Hannah

Your dearly beloved son and my best friend has gone the way of all the earth. He was a dear faithful friend on earth, in death dearer to me than my own soul. God reward him for all the kind care he has taken of me. Although we have not been together so long as we fondly anticipated, yet we had an age of happiness. This news will doubtless overwhelm you with sorrow. May God support you under it is

[69] One of the Sirrine family traditions is that Mephibosheth Sirrine was the first missionary to die while in the field. This is false. As far as I can tell, the first was Joseph Brackenbury, whose death on January 7, 1832 in Pomfret, Chautauqua County, New York at age 44 was suspected to be from poisoning by his enemies. His companion, Elder Joel H. Johnson, was warned in a dream that doctors would attempt to dig up the elder's body for dissections, but succeeded in getting one of the would-be grave robbers arrested. Missionary John Herritt died October 13, 1838 in the Fox Islands, Maine. Also having died earlier were Lorenzo D. Barnes on December 20, 1842 in Yorkshire, England at age 30, James Burnham on March 22, 1843 of "quick consumption brought on by inclemency of the weather and excessive labor" in Richmond, Massachusetts at the age of 53, Knowlton Hanks on November 3, 1843

the prayer of your afflicted daughter. O Mother, O Mother, here I am at the Bluffs with my three children and with no husband, no little Maria, no Father, Mother, Brother, or Sister, nothing but the remains of departed joys and almost entirely among strangers and knowing that I shall never see them again if I do the will of my dear husband, which I shall do if it takes my life, and that is to go to the valley of the Salt Lake and take good care of the children.

He died on the steamboat Niagara 2 ½ days before arriving at St. Louis, 28 of April, and such a patient man I never saw. He enjoyed himself very well until we got on the Ohio River, where I thought he seemed to fail, but he would say till the very last he was getting better. He never lost but two meals, his death was very unexpected to me. My constant prayer was that he might be spared to see his boys and then if it was the Lord's will to take him I was willing. But no, my prayers can never be answered. O the troubles and trials I have had to pass through no one knows. The day before he died in the morning I said to him, Sirrine, what shall I do if you die? He says I will tell you all about it before I die. I said do tell me now. He says no, I shall not die. I said no more about it, he was in great distress in his bowels most of the day and was out of his head some of the time. The afternoon before he died at night we made a bed on the sofa in the ladies' cabin, for the births in the stateroom were so confused. He walked out, got into the bed himself, was very strong. I made my bed on the floor by the side of him but he could not sleep but set up in bed all night. At two o'clock John Cook got up (Brother Cook that came from England with him) *and he desired to go back in the state room, which he did. He remained there until about 10 o'clock. The phlegm in his throat soon commenced rattling and he would say to me, do you hear it, do you hear it? I said to John, this will not do to be so confined. I took hold of his hand and saw his nails were very blue. We then took hold of him and he walked to his chair, began to punch his nose and rub his eyes. They were enlarging fast. The doctor then came in and said he was a dying and laid him on the sofa. I bent down to him and said, Sirrine, do you know me? He says, why yes it is Rachel my wife. I then said, are you a going to die? He smiled and said no indeed. In a few minutes he breathed his last as easily as an infant would sink to sleep. There was a lead coffin on the boat, which I borrowed for three days. There taken to the undertaker in St. Louis, where he was preserved and taken to the Bluffs. After landing I sent for the boys who resided--*

The last page is missing. It doesn't tell where their sons resided. But the heading of Rachel's letter suggests the answer. By July she and all three children were together in

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on the Atlantic Ocean at age 27, en route to his mission in the Sandwich Islands. Elder Joshua R. G. Phelps, aged 31 years, died in Brownstown, Michigan on August 20, 1844. He was on a mission to Canada.

Honey Creek, a small town on the Iowa side of the Missouri River about 15 miles north of Council Bluffs.

By that time the Terry family had reunited in the Council Bluffs area, except for Cynthia Ruggles Terry, the matriarch of the family, who had died in August of 1846 at the Mormon waystation in Garden Grove, Decatur County, Iowa.[70] Family accounts of exactly how and when the various family members got from Nauvoo to Honey Creek, Iowa, vary somewhat, but I'll give the best summary that I can. All accounts agree that Charles Alphonzo and Philinda reached Winter Quarters some time in 1846. They traveled with the two Sirrine boys and their own toddler son and probably took Philinda's recently widowed 54 year old mother, Philinda Marsh Loveridge with them, which might have been necessary to care for the two babies.

The other Mormon son Otis Lysander and his wife Fannie Loveridge (who was the sister of his brother's wife) probably also traveled directly to Winter Quarters. They had a 12 month old son with them. Apparently each couple traveled with one of the grandmothers. The youngest Terry son, the unbaptized 19 year old Henry Algernon Terry, was emancipated from his family, and stayed to farm in Garden Grove for a year. During the winter of 1846-7 he found a job teaching school just over the Missouri border in Mercer County, a job which might have been hazardous for a Mormon.

Otis Terry, the patriarch of the family, was able to join the rest of the family in 1847 in Winter Quarters, where he married Philinda Marsh Loveridge, the mother-in-law to his married sons. By the fall of 1847 the wayward son, Henry, had also made his way to Honey Creek, Iowa, where he got another job teaching school. Otis was again serving as Bishop, this time in Honey Creek.

Mephibosheth's burial service in Winter Quarters was held on May 21, 1848. It was six weeks later that Rachel wrote her letter to the Sirrines. I think it is safe to assume that by then she and 13 year old Helen had found a place to live with the Terrys. As she wrote, she was "*at the Bluffs with my three children and with no husband, no little Maria, no Father, Mother, Brother, or Sister."* But that was soon to change.

On September 4, 1848 Rachel Gillett Sirrine and Henry Algernon Terry were married in Crescent, Pottawattamie County, Iowa. They made their home there. Crescent is just six miles south of Honey Creek on the way to Council Bluffs. There Henry set up business as a grocer. This was described in his obituary as the first store in Pottawattamie County.

I do not know where the three Sirrine step-children lived for the next 18 months, but in the 1850 U.S. census, 16 year old Helen and six year old Parley[71] were living with Rachel and Henry. By then the couple had their own infant son named Henry, who was

[70] Other accounts give Cynthia's place of death as Kanesville. Both places suggest that she died while she accompanied her sons west, leaving her husband Otis behind in Sugar Creek camp, where he was serving as Bishop.

[71] Parley was incorrectly listed as nine.

listed as one year of age. Theodore, now nine years old, was still living with Charles and Philinda Terry in Honey Creek.

Shortly after that census was taken, all the Terrys except Henry departed for Utah. They were members of the Warren Foote wagon company of 540 people and 104 wagons, which departed from Council Bluffs on June 17, 1850. Bishop Otis Terry was a Captain of 100 and Otis Lysander Terry a Captain of 50. They took along Alexander Hamilton Loveridge, brother of the two Terry wives, and his young family. None of the Sirrine children were listed as members of the company, but I am almost certain that Theodore was among them, for he appeared with Charles and Philinda in Salt Lake City in the 1850 Utah census, which was actually registered in early 1851.

But where were Helen and Parley? They were not with any of the three Terry families in the belated Utah 1850 census. I assume that they stayed at least for a time with Rachel and Henry in Crescent.

According to one of Henry Algernon Terry's brief biographies, it was around 1851 that he and Rachel left Iowa. What I have learned about Parley suggests to me that it was probably 1852. They sold out their business and returned to Rachel's home town of Fair Haven, Connecticut, where Henry worked as a store clerk for his brother-in-law[72] for two years before returning to Council Bluffs, where he entered the seed and grain business. In 1857 he sold this business and moved back to Crescent, where the couple lived comfortably for the rest of their lives.[73] Rachel died in Crescent, Pottawatomie County, Iowa at the age of 50. Henry re-married and had six more children. He was a nurseryman and had the finest orchard in the state. A variety of plum was named after him.

Parley Sirrine's name appears in the Mormon pioneer travel database. At the age of eight he traveled west with the David Wood Company, which left the outfitting post at Kanesville on June 6, 1852 and arrived in Salt Lake Valley on September 20th. He traveled with Oren Jefferds, his wife Zerena, and their adopted 13 year old daughter named Helen Louisa Frederick. Jefferds' colorful, detailed diary gives plenty of insight into his connection with Parley.[74] To summarize the pertinent part, Oren Jefferds was living in Michigan when he traveled 42 miles to hear Mephibosheth Sirrine preach on October 8, 1840. Three weeks later Mephibosheth traveled the same distance to preach in Oren's house and soon baptized him. The new convert was ordained a Priest on November 15th in Superior and an Elder at the December conference in Livonia, Wayne County under the hands of Elders Sirrine and Rufus Beach. Three years later

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[72] Rachel's only brother was the Illinois cattle baron John Dean Gillette. I think it is more likely that Henry worked for Smith Gillett Tuttle, Rachel's 22 year old half-brother.

[73] Rachel's mother Amarilla Tuttle died in Connecticut in 1866, a year after the death of Smith Tuttle, leaving a considerable estate. Rachel inherited $15,496 and each of her living children received $968.54. Together that would be about $300,000 in today's dollars.

[74] Kudos to Mephibosheth's 2nd great grandson Mark Sirrine for discovering and posting Oren's diary. https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/memories/LHVW-KQD.

he assisted Mephibosheth in the baptisms of the Terry family and in the healing of both grandmothers, one of cancer and the other of consumption. When Oren was ordained a High Priest in 1844, *"Brother Terry"* (probably Otis), was one of the bishopric involved.

Of the trip west with Mephibosheth's youngest child, Oren simply wrote: *I brought Parley Sirrine across the plains and he lived with me until the next summer.* One family genealogist wrote that Brigham Young helped to take care of the children.[75] She offered no documentation of that and I have not been able to confirm it. Oren Jefferds' statement seems to contradict it, at least for Parley. In a newspaper article at the time of Theodore's death in 1922, the boys were reported to have traveled to San Bernardino in 1863 in the company of the Apostles Charles C. Rich and Amasa Lyman,[76] where they were adopted by their uncle, George Warren Sirrine.

So how did Helen get from Iowa to San Bernardino? I can only speculate on that, so take the following theory with a grain of salt.

One possibility is that Rachel and Henry took Helen with them to Fair Haven, Connecticut. If so, perhaps Helen had a chance to live with her Sirrine grandparents during that time, or with her aunt, Hannah Mead, Mephibosheth's sister. While in Fair Haven the Terrys had a second child of their own, Amarilla Cynthia, named for her two grandmothers. But if Helen went east, it only further complicates the question of how she eventually got to San Bernardino.

Ester Ann Sirrine with George E. and LeRoy 1856

All that I know for certain is that the children were living with their Uncle George Warren Sirrine in San Bernardino, California sometime between 1852 and the summer of 1856. According to the special California census,[77] George and his wife Esther Ann were living in San Bernardino with no children in September, 1852. We also know that in 1856, George and Esther Ann moved to San Diego with four boys, two of which were their own,[78] and the others were Theodore and Parley. Helen was married that year to William Barnett, who had come with his family to the Mormon San Bernardino settlement sometime after

[75] Budge, Irene Holmes, *History and Genealogy of the Holmes Family of Londonderry, New Hampshire,* Family History Publishers, Bountiful, Utah, 1996, p. 99.

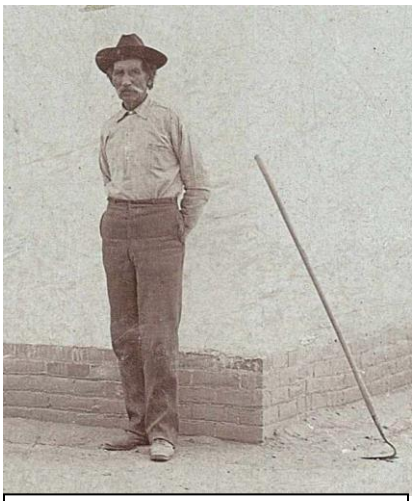
[76] Charles C. Rich and Amasa Lyman were in Utah for the winter of 1853 and in San Bernardino in April. I am not sure that they traveled together--Lyman's journal did not mention Rich or any other traveling companions. His party arrived in San Bernardino on May 15, 1853.

[77] The 1850 U.S. Census for California was destroyed in the great San Francisco fire, so a replacement count was conducted in 1852. I know that San Bernardino was canvassed in September by identifying an infant in the Sirrines' neighborhood, whose age was given as one month.

[78] Their two sons were my great grandfather, George Edward Sirrine and LeRoy Sirrine, who wrote the stories about Mephibosheth that I have quoted in this work.

1852. William's family had lived in Winter Quarters, and had immigrated to Salt Lake City that year on a wagon train led by Crandell Dunn, Mephibosheth's old missionary companion. The beginning and ending dates of their trip were almost the same as Parley's company. William was 20 at that time and Helen was 17. My theory is that Helen may have already had a connection with William, and traveled to Utah with his family, although she was not listed among the members of the company (or of any other.) When the Barnetts later left Salt Lake for San Bernardino, they may have taken Helen and the two boys with them. It seems possible that they could have traveled with the two apostles as reported.

In 1853, George Warren Sirrine's family was a complicated one. His wife Esther Ann, who was only 17 years old, had a baby boy born in July. Living with them was Mary Ann, George's six year old daughter from a previous marriage. Parley was nine. Theodore was 14 and Helen was 18, a year older that her new stepmother. That would have been a difficult start in marriage for Esther Ann, and awkward for Helen as well, who was not to marry William Barnett for two or three more years.



Theodore Sirrine
Union, Oregon

When the Mormons were called back to Utah by Brigham Young from San Bernardino in 1857 in anticipation of a war with the federal government, George Warren Sirrine's family returned, bringing Theodore with them, but Helen and William remained in San Bernardino. In the 1860 census, 16 year old Parley was living with them and their two little boys. Theodore had traveled with George's family to Utah in 1857, lived for a short time in the town of Washington, then in Salt Lake City, and finally moved with them to colonize Bear Lake County, Idaho in 1864. There he married Laura Holmes and settled in Dingle, Idaho. They and their first four children wagon trained with George's family in the fall of 1877 to be the first settlers in Mesa, Arizona. Theodore was a millwright like his Uncle George and his grandfather, Isaac Sirrine, and built mills in Idaho and in Mesa. Interestingly, the city of Mesa, Arizona is located on Theodore's homestead claim, which he donated to the community.

Helen and William Burnett remained in California, raising their family there. But sometime between 1880 and 1884 they moved with their children's families to Mesa, Arizona, to join George and Theodore's families. Helen died in Mesa in the year 1900 at the age of 65.

Parley Sirrine never married. Before 1870 he had moved to Dingle, Idaho, where he lived with Theodore and Laura. He would have been 33 when he was part of the Mesa settlement, and lived there as a part of Theodore's household until 1907, when Theodore moved to Union, Oregon and then for a time in Raymond, Alberta, Canada.

Parley was living in Mesa in 1910 with the family of Sarah Radell, George Warren Sirrine's first daughter. But before 1914, he had joined Theodore in Union, where Parley died in 1918 at the age of 74. Theodore died in Union in 1922. He and Laura had ten children.

Their last child was named Mephibosheth.

By Kim Bateman, Mephibosheth N. Sirrine's 3rd great nephew.
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